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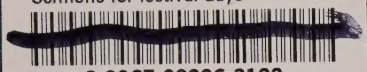
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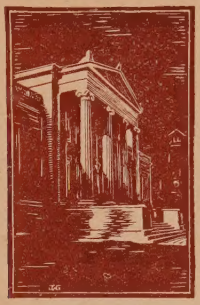

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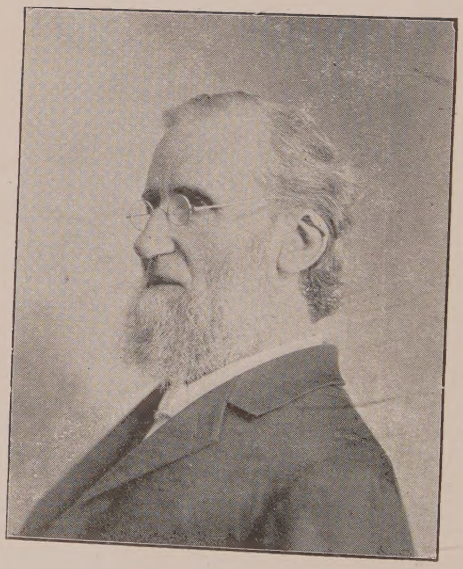

L. A. Gothard.

Sermons

FOR

FESTIVAL DAYS

BY

L. A. GOTWALD, D. D.

George D. Harter, Professor of Practical Theology in Wittenberg (Lutheran) Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ohio.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

D. H. BAUSLIN, D. D.

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Dedication.

To my esteemed colleagues of the Theological Faculty of Wittenberg College,

THE REV. DR. SAMUEL A. ORT
AND
THE REV. DR. SAMUEL F. BRECKENRIDGE,

with whom I have been most pleasantly and in unbroken friendship associated in years gone by, and with whom I now find joy in continued fellowship and service in the high work of training men for the Holy Office of the Christian Ministry; and

TO MY THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS.

both those now in preparation for the Sacred Office and those who have entered it, for whose largest usefulness, as Preachers and Pastors in the Church of Christ, my best strength and service have ever cheerfully and affectionately been given, this Volume of Sermons for Festival Days is lovingly dedicated.

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The Introduction.

THERE is a wider prospect," says that gifted genius, Jean Paul Richter, "from Parnassus than from the throne." Men are as liable to be corrupted by books as by companions. Next to acquiring good and helpful friends, the very best acquisition is a good book which is a faithful mirror to reflect the mind and heart of a good man. Accordingly a good book is a real benefaction. It is a marked feature of the present time that no books command wider attention among devout and thoughtful people than the published sermons which combine sound evangelical thought with good literary form. Possibly the fierce assaults which have been and still are being made against the Christian faith have had the effect to awaken a lively interest in such productions, and the result is, that the Christian minister is having a wider hearing than he otherwise could have.

The author of this volume of sermons is well known in the Evangelical Lutheran Church as having been successively the pastor of some of its strongest and best known churches, and now for some years as the Professor of Practical Theology in one of its leading schools for the training of ministers. In all his work he has applied himself with a devotion which has been unmixed with and untarnished by secular entanglements and pursuits not in harmony with the high ideal of his exalted calling. We have no need to say to anyone who knows Dr. Gotwald

and his methods of work, that what is presented in this volume is marked by the characteristics which have made of him a most attractive Christian gentleman. He possesses many qualities which will impart to his work elements of permanent value. His intense warmth of feeling, his devout affection for Christ and His gospel, supplemented by fine qualities of style, render him peculiarly fitted to execute the task which has been accomplished in this volume of his sermons.

He has been known as a cultivated and impressive preacher. In the work here presented to the reader he has employed his powers of mind and brought his fervor of spirit to an exposition of the great events of the evangelical history and the chief doctrines of our holy religion, and has rendered a welcome service, not only to his personal friends, but to many who will be interested in the subjects he discusses.

The production of a good sermon is, no doubt, largely influenced by the sermonizer's environment. Many of the Church's best sermonic productions have been wrought out in the midst of affliction, imprisonment and exile, in sickness, infirmity and pain, in hunger and cold, tumults, persecutions and distresses. These sermons, the writer feels he may properly say, have been prepared in one of the most delightful home environments, and it is not possible that the study in which they have taken form should have been uninfluenced by the helpful and beautiful associations of an ideal Christian household.

One of the worst mistakes of Puritanic Protestantism was the needless sundering of the connection between the religious life of today and the great events of the earlier Christian ages, which were celebrated by such days as Christmas and Easter. It is part of our probation to use such adjuncts of religion instead of abusing them. Such

festival, commemorative of the great events of Christian history, have unquestionably been made helpful to Christian devotion, and have been to multitudes of our fellowmen nearly the sole reminders of Christian truth. Accordingly the author has selected these discourses wisely, and they furnish a happy illustration of the varieties of truth which may be presented in a wise use of the chief festival days of the Christian year. He explains the symbolism and unfolds the meaning of these days, not with a view to make them conform to some special theory, but by allowing them to speak for themselves in the simplest and most natural manner. They bring before the reader the great truths of the Gospel—truths which, in these days, are sadly neglected even in some alleged evangelical pulpits, and press upon men questions of abiding and living interest. They deal with great themes, and as their leading function set forth the great facts of the redemptive history.

It is a noble conception of the work of a preacher of the Gospel which is presented in these discourses, and he who reads them aright will, we feel sure, be able to gather clear and just ideas of the character of the most helpful sort of preaching, which is done in our day, without the blare of trumpets, in the great majority, we are disposed to think, of evangelical pulpits. The author has thought his subjects out well, and no line of slipshod and careless preparation is manifest in the entire volume. The treatment of the subjects is inspiring and thorough, and such as to open up comprehensive and evangelical views and present a wide range of rich and practical suggestions. The tone of every sermon in the volume is cautious, reverent, tender and considerate, while they are thoroughly earnest, and, in no depressing way, what all good sermons should be, serious. The faith which makes humanity whole, the truth which makes men free, is set forth in

these sermons with a scripturalness without which sermonic literature is worthless, and with those indispensable features of all effective preaching, an orderliness of arrangement and simplicity of diction such as will enable them to be understood by all. Above all, and more than all, in their entirety, Christ is first, last, and all in all. The teaching of the Lord here comes to us through a human medium which is clear and concise and plain, but full of sound reasoning, practical deduction, and the eloquence of a heart filled with the love of Christ and the spirit of love and good-will toward men.

One of the features of this book, which will make it of abiding interest and permanent worth, especially to young ministers, is its value as a homiletic model. The author brings to his task a fine homiletic instinct, which will present at a glance the best pulpit use to which a text of scripture may be put, and what are the great truths it contains. No fog hangs over the method upon which these discourses are constructed. They contain a plan which will commend itself to every reader who desires to follow easily the order of an author's thought. The author gives to each sermon its fitting perspective, and this is done in a way which will surprise the reader who looks for philosophical disquisition upon every incident, after the well-known fashion of some of the commentators. The book is a good example of the best homiletical apparatus.

We are, therefore, constrained to believe that this volume will become a useful adjunct in the pastor's study and in the Christian home, presenting, in the one, a good example of how to utilize the Christian festivals for presenting the most precious truths of our Lord's Gospel, and furnishing, in the other, that wholesome kind of devout reading which combines the qualities of orderliness, instruction, edification and spiritual uplifting. The home is

the fountain-head of society, and it is of immense consequence, not only for the Church, but also for the community, that its reading shall be dominated by the spirit of Christ. To aid in doing this, a volume, such as this, characterized by the stiffest evangelicalism, united with great fervor of heart, can be made of great value in giving instruction and strengthening character, by a wise use at the quiet Sunday-afternoon hour and other seasons of pious meditation.

It only remains for the writer to say that the book appears in a dress worthy of the excellent spirit of its author and the solid reputation he sustains wherever he has labored or is known as citizen, pastor, preacher and professor. In its mechanical execution it presents a good example of what intelligent skill and the resources of the printer's art can give the reading public within the limits of a moderate cost. The sermons are presented so that they may be read with ease even by eyes that have no longer the clearness of youth.

In this volume Dr. Gotwald has placed the Christian public under obligations. He has herein presented some of the best work of his life, and given to the Church and the world what might have been expected from a man of his true evangelical spirit and painstaking application as a student. He has done what will stimulate thought, deepen piety, and enlarge the horizon of the kingdom of our blessed Lord.

DAVID H. BAUSLIN.

Canton, Ohio.
Advent Season, 1895.

I.

THE WONDROUS PERSON OF THE GOD-MAN.

First Sunday in Advent.

COLLECT.

Most merciful God, who hast given Thine eternal Word to be made incarnate of the pure Virgin: grant unto Thy people grace to put away fleshy lusts, that so they may be ready for Thy visitation; through the same, Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

I.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

JOHN, i:14.

BELOVED in the Lord! The Church enters joyously today upon that portion of her sacred year designated as the Festival of Advent. It is that period in which she gives herself up to continuous and devout thought upon the great fact of the incarnation, in which she adoringly contemplates the infinite gift to our lost world of a Savior, and in which she seeks to prepare herself to meet and greet her coming Lord, when, on the approaching Christmas Day, as the Babe of Bethlehem, He shall take on Himself our humanity and tabernacle as our Redeemer among us.

It is a holy and blessed season, rich in comfort and joy to all who enter truly into its precious significance, and to all who hail in faith and love the Savior who now draws near. Let us then, along with the Christian Church all over the world, enter, today, in grateful and adoring love upon this season of Holy Advent, and let us all humbly pray that it may prove to us a season full of spiritual benediction.

The text chosen for our thought, today, dwells specifically upon the great mystery of the Person of the Savior. It designates Him by a distinctive and

most remarkable term. It speaks of Him as "the Word"; and this Word it declares became Flesh: not dwelt in flesh, lived in a body of flesh, as something only inhabiting it, yet not in union with it; but it declares that this divine Being whom it terms "the Word", actually was made or became flesh. And then, it further declares, that this Word, thus having become incarnate, tabernacled visibly here among men, and manifested among them the power, the glory, of His superhuman Being, His Godhead in human form: "The glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

To a consideration of these thoughts I now ask your attention. Notice—

1. That our text designates the divine Nature that became incarnate as "the Word".

Its declaration is: "The Word became flesh."

This is a term, as a designation of Christ, peculiar to John, and frequently used by him in this special sense. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life." "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and His name is called, the Word of God."

But why does John thus employ this unusual term, or why, rather, does he thus employ a very familiar Greek word in this very unique and unusual sense, to designate the Deity that thus incarnates Himself, and dwells among men in the form of man? There must be some special design in its use;

it must have some peculiar significance. What is it? This evidently was the significance of it, and the reason for its use by the evangelist: he meant by it, in the very name by which he thus calls Him, to express what the Scriptures elsewhere repeatedly declare, that Christ came into our world as the Revealer to man of God, as the Utterance, the Expression, the Exhibition to man of the character and disposition toward him of God, and especially of God's love toward him and of His desire to save him, and ability through Christ to save him.

It is by our words that we make known to others what we think and feel and desire. A word is that by which we communicate our will, by which we convey our thoughts, or by which we issue our commands. It is the medium of communication with others. And thus Christ is "the Word". He is the Medium by which God has made Himself known to man; the Manifestation to us of God; the Expression of God's thoughts and feelings toward us. Only in and through Christ do we know God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "God, who, at sundry times and in divers maners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us, by His Son." "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God." "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Thus is Christ the Word, the expression to man of the mind and will and heart of God; "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person." Hence, as words, among men, are the media or vehicles of thoughts and feelings, of de-

sires and purposes, so is Christ the Word or the Expression to us of God. He is "the Word", speaking in His incarnation from God to us, and speaking now in His intercession to God for us. He is the Revealer to us of God, and He also is the Intercessor with God for us. This, then, is properly His name: "The Word".

But notice now,

2. That our text declares the Word was made flesh.

Its emphatic declaration is, that this Word, this Christ, this God, became man. He came into the world, and came into it in the form and nature of man. And more. It affirms, not only that He was flesh, but that He became such: implying that He had pre-existence; that He was not created, but came; that He entered our world from another world; that He laid aside one form or manner of existence in order to assume existence in our human form. "The Word became flesh." Or, as we elsewhere read: "A body hast Thou prepared me." "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

This expression, then, means that this eternal Word of God became man; took to Himself and into vital union with His divine nature, so as together to constitute one Person, even the "God-Man", our human nature, both soul and body, or our complete humanity. "The Word became flesh." Divinity veiled itself in the garb of humanity. The infinite allied itself with the finite. God and man came into inseparable union in the Person of the "God-Man", Christ Jesus.

"Ere the blue heavens were stretched abroad,
From everlasting was the Word;
With God He was; the Word was God,
And must divinely be adored.

"But lo! He leaves those heavenly forms,
The Word descends and dwells in clay,
That He may converse hold with worms,
Drest in such feeble flesh as they."

This union of two natures in Christ's one Person is, of course, a deep mystery. The mode, or exact character, of it, the precise relation of these two natures to each other, we can not understand or explain; just as we can not fully understand the union which exists between our own souls and bodies, or the relations they sustain to each other, or the exact influence which they exert upon each other. But the fact of such union, that "the Word" really became flesh, that in the one Person of Christ the divine and human natures actually are united, this the Scriptures most emphatically and repeatedly declare, and this we most heartily believe. "The Word became flesh." That is a fundamental doctrine of our Christian faith, a very pillar in the great temple of Christianity, a cornerstone upon which rests the whole fabric of our hope. It is especially a fundamental doctrine in our Lutheran theology. He was Emanuel—"God with us." He was "God manifest in the flesh." The two natures are inseparably united in one divine-human Person.

And, yet, let us remember that these two natures, although thus constituting one Person, are, nevertheless, in this one Person, never confounded, or confused, or absorbed in each other. They are not swallowed up, the one in the other, so as together to

form one new and different nature. But there are always, in this mysterious Person of Christ, the two natures, the one human, the other divine, separate and distinct the one from the other: each a something in itself, possessed of its own attributes and powers and qualities. And yet each of these natures is so closely related to the other associated Nature, and both of them, together, so really constitute the one unique, divine-human Person, not man alone, nor God alone, but, together, the wondrous Person designated as the God-Man, that each nature acts in full harmony and unity with the other nature, and each communicates its properties, or attributes, to the other, and shares its peculiarities with the other, so that what is predicted of Christ is predicted of Him, not with respect to this or that one of His Natures, but of His Person, constituted, in inseparable union, of His two Natures. It is a real union. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. "The Word became flesh." As the apostle says: "And, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory." (R. V.)

But our text has a third thought, viz:

3. That this Divine Word, having thus inseparably united Himself to "flesh", that is, to our human nature, dwelt among us, or abode temporarily in human form visibly among men.

Having taken upon Himself the nature of man, sin excepted, he put Himself also into the place and condition of man, and entered into all the experiences of man.

He might have been made "flesh", and still continued or "dwelt" among the angels. But, no! He "dwelt among us," says John. "Among us," whom He had come to save: among us sinners, us worms of the earth, us that He had no need of, us rebels against God, us who were unappreciative of all His love, who rejected all His offers of mercy, who persecuted and hated Him, and, at last, even put Him to death. He dwelt among us." The meaning is, that He was one with the children of men, as if He Himself were only a man, and no more. "He dwelt among us."

Under the Old Dispensation, He came only occasionally to our earth: came in occasional Theophanies, came on special errands, and in short interviews with some of the Old Testament saints. But now He made, for thirty-three years, our earth His dwelling. He abode here. Here, during all that time, He remained, conversing with men, and giving the clearest evidence possible of the reality of His incarnation. He did not, simply, like a phantom or ghost, appear only for a few moments. He did not come down from heaven simply for a brief visit. But He "dwelt" among us. He made our world His home; He came into our condition; let Himself into all our experiences; passed through all our stages of life; knew, by actual personal test or trial, all of life that we, by its test or trial, know of it. Like ourselves, He grew, from infancy to boyhood, and from boyhood to man's estate. Like ourselves, he hungered, thirsted, ate, drank, slept, was wearied, felt pain, wept, rejoiced, marveled, was moved at times to indignation, and at other times to compassion. Like ourselves, He prayed, read the Scrip-

tures, was tempted, submitted His will to the will of God His Father. He had the same constitution of body that we have; the same kind of soul, with the same faculties; the same surroundings and relations; the same sorrows and joys; the same temptations and trials of life; walked the same earth; breathed the same air; drank the same water; was, during all those long years, a man, just as we are men; dwelling here on earth as we dwell on it; "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

> "Touched with a sympathy within,
> He knows our feeble frame;
> He knows what sore temptations mean,
> For He has felt the same."

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

The word translated "dwelt", in the original, means "dwelt as in a tabernacle or tent"; meaning, therefore, that the human body was a tabernacle or tent, in which the Divine Word, while here upon earth, had His abode: as the Shekinah, or visible symbol of God, under the Old Dispensation, dwelt in the tabernacle. His body was the tent or tabernacle, in which, during these thirty-three years, the Eternal Word took up His abode and made His home. And, in that tabernacle of His body, that Word still dwells, and will forever dwell, for the union is indissoluble. In that same body which was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary; which was presented in the temple; which was laid in the manger; which was baptized in Jordan; which toiled in the workshop at Nazareth; which walked wearily on errands of mercy all

over the land of Palestine; which hung on the cross; which was buried in the grave; and which rose and ascended from the Mount of Olives into heaven; in that very same body, now glorified, the Eternal Word still dwells, and will forever dwell. So, that, in the Person of the "God-Man", Christ Jesus, humanity and divinity shall be eternally united. Together they shall eternally continue to constitute the glorious and mysterious Person of the God-Man. The same visible divine-human Person, upon which the disciples, when He was here on earth, so often looked, and which they handled, and through which there gleamed forth upon them the glory of Deity, dwelling within a sinless human form—upon that we shall hereafter, in heaven, also look, and shall know, and from it there shall also break eternally upon our vision "the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

But, possibly, the declaration that "the Word dwelt among us, as in a tent," is intended, also, to remind us of the humble or lowly condition in which our Savior "dwelt" among men, when here upon earth. Others "dwelt" in palaces; He as in a tent, for "He had not where to lay His head," and was always moving from place to place. Others had homes; He had none. Others were rich; He was poor. Others traveled in ease and splendor; He traveled on foot, and was often weary with His journey. Others were surrounded by officers of state, and with all the trappings of royalty; He was despised and persecuted and rejected of men. Others were ministered unto; He came to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. This was His a lowly humble condition; a condition resembling that

of poor shepherds, or travelers, dwelling in tents, moving from place to place, and without a home. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." In poverty, in obscurity, in lowliness, in want, in persecution, in the greatest humilation, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," a poor, wayfaring man, misunderstood, taunted, reviled, despised, rejected, hated, nailed to the cross, thus did this Eternal Word, having once become "flesh", dwell here upon earth among men.

But, with it all, He still was the Eternal Word. He still, under this veil of our humanity, was the Infinite Son of God, the same glorious divine Being that He had been "in the beginning," when, before His incarnation, "He was with God, and was God." His glory, as God, though veiled in the tabernacle of the body which it then inhabited, and then purposely concealed, was still the same that it had ever been.

"Christ, by highest heavens adored,
Christ, the Everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb!
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the Incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel!"

Our text, however, declares yet another truth concerning this Incarnate Word, viz:

4. That He here authenticated or proved Himself to be the Incarnate Word.

He manifested Himself as the God-Man among men, and so manifested Himself, by the glory of

God which shone through Him, that men saw and knew that He was assuredly what He declared Himself to be: the Everlasting Word become flesh. "And we," says John, "beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Often, during the earth-life of the Incarnate Son of God, the glory of His divine nature, the power and grace of His Godhead, shone forth and was seen of men, giving proof to all who were willing to see, that He was, indeed, as He claimed, "God, manifest in the flesh." He gave evidence that, under the humble form of our humanity, Divinity itself had come down to earth, and was in Him dwelling among men. Those that would see, could also see that, in Jesus of Nazareth, the Eternal Word had, at last, as the world's Messiah, made His Advent.

And many, also, there were who did thus see and receive Him, in all His incarnate glory and fulness, as a Savior. "The Word," says John, "was made flesh, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." By which he means that, although the Word was in the form of man, had been "made flesh", yet, beneath that form, under and through that humble garb, we, who were with Him, and saw most of Him, and knew Him best—we, from time to time, saw that He was more than mere man. We saw His glory as God; we had manifest proof that He was, indeed, as He declared, the Only-Begotten Son of God. We beheld such glory or divine excellence revealed in Him as declared Him to be, beyond a doubt, none less than God Himself. This divine glory, this evidence that He was, indeed, the

Divine and Eternal Word, we saw. We saw it in His spotless and holy life; in His sinless character; in His superhuman doctrines; in the repeated and evident miracles which He wrought; in the supernatural occurrences during His crucifixion and death; in His glorious resurection from the grave; in His final ascension in a cloud of glory into heaven. And three of our number, Peter, James, and I, John, on one occasion, beheld an especial display of His divine glory. It was on the Mount of Transfiguration, when His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light, when a bright cloud overshadowed Him, and a voice was heard out of the cloud, which said: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." Then, for awhile, His divine glory broke out through the veil of His humanity in sublime fulness and splendor. Then we saw and knew Him to be, not only the Son of Joseph and Mary, but the Son also of God, the Everlasting Father. Then we saw His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; saw that He was the divine, gracious, real, true Messiah, and Savior of the world. Or, as St. Peter expresses it: "We were eyewitnesses of His Majesty; for He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, and this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount."

This, now, beloved, is the character of the coming Christ, whom this Holy Advent Festival bids us prepare ourselves to welcome to our hearts. He is, indeed, a wondrous Being; an unique Personality; a divine-human Savior; "the Word become flesh;"

the Mystery of the inseparable union, in His one Person, of both the human and the divine natures; the indissoluble Wedlock of humanity and divinity, so that we can sing:

> "Hosanna to the royal Son
> Of David's ancient line;
> His Natures two, His Person one,
> Mysterious and divine."

For this constitution of the Person of our Savior let us all, today, be filled with Advent joy. To be to us a perfect Savior, such as He is, He needed thus to be, and forever continue, in His One Person, both God and Man. There was infinite moral necessity that the Word should become flesh. As God only, He could not have saved us; incarnation was necessary. The word had to clothe Himself in a robe of flesh, before there could be the vicarious suffering and atonement needed for our salvation. And, as man only, He could not have saved us: for "flesh" alone, even sinless flesh, was insufficient to give that infinite worth and dignity to the work of our redemption which was needed to render it effective and secure to us our salvation. The Savior must needs, therefore, be what He was, and what He is, and what He always will be: God and Man, Humanity and Deity, "the Word become flesh."

Thanks, then, be unto God for His unspeakable Gift: the Gift of His own Son, the Great Mystery of the Word Incarnate.

II.

THE LESSONS OF THE MANGER.

Christmas.

COLLECT.

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the new birth of thine only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free, who are held bondage under the yoke of sin; through the same, thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world with end. Amen.

II.

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

LUKE, ii:15

IT must, I think, be conceded that there is no clear proof in Church History of the observance by the early Christian Church of a "Christmas Festival", in distinct commemoration of the birth of Christ, before the beginning of the fourth century. Speaking of the Church during the first three centuries of the Christian era, Dr. Kurtz, the Lutheran historian, says: "As yet there is nowhere any trace of the Christmas festival." "This may doubtless be accounted for," says Dr. Schaff, "in the following manner: In the first place, no corresponding festival was presented by the Old Testament, as in the case of Easter and Pentecost. In the second place, the day and month of the birth of Christ are nowhere stated in the gospel history, and can not be certainly determined. Again, the Church lingered first about the death and resurrection of Christ, the completed fact of redemption, and made this the center of the weekly worship and of the church year. And, finally, the earlier festival of 'Epiphany', celebrating both the birth and the baptism of Jesus, and observed on the 6th of January, afforded a substitute."

From the fourth century onward, however, down to the present day, this Christmas festival, commemorative of our Savior's advent, has been observed in the whole Christian world.

The day fixed upon by the Church about that time as the day to be observed as "Christmas Day," or the Feast of the Nativity, was the 25th of December. This date was chosen partly for symbolical or didactic reasons, namely, to express the great truth that Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the World, has burst forth upon our dark and dead world, as the unconquered sun in the natural world, on the 25th day of December, after the winter solstice, breaks the growing power of darkness, and begins anew his heroic career. Partly, also, this day was finally chosen in the Church as "Christmas Day", because the Church came about that time for various reasons, to the conviction that Christ was actually born at Bethlehem upon that day; a conviction which may be or may not be correct, and a date which we now have the means neither to prove nor to disprove. Nor is it material. The great fact of the Advent is alone the one material thing. To know with entire assurance that "the Word was made Flesh," that Christ, the Son of God, took on Himself our human nature and became the Son of Man, that the incarnation is an actual and absolutely certain historic reality, that fact is sufficient to know. Concerning the very day or time of its occurrence, we may be content to be uncertain. Any day in the whole calendar of the year would then have served well as the day of that illustrious Divine Coming; and any day in the year now would serve well as the day upon which to celebrate it.

The return, annually, of "Christmas Day" brings anew a tide of holy gladness throughout all the Christian world. No other festival in the whole Church year awakens such universal joy, or crowns all Christian hearts and homes and lands with the sweet benediction of love and peace and unity as does this Holy Festival of the advent to our earth of the Son of God. On this day all who bear the Christian name, dwelling in all lands, speaking and worshiping in all languages, however divided by national or ecclesiastical distinctions, greet each other as fellow-disciples of the same blessed Lord, and, with clasped hands and united hearts, stand together around the manger of their same Infant Redeemer, and join in the "Angelic Song": "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

And, even to millions, also, who are not in heart and life followers of that Incarnate Savior, what a day of interest and gladness "Christmas" is. What joy it also generates for them. What love and good feeling it everywhere gently distils. What a bringing of all the world together, into one common brotherhood of interest and nearness and sympathy it effects. What brothers of us all it makes. What light it sheds over home-life everywhere. What a very heaven of joy to the dear children "Christmas" is: in sweet vision and anticipation long days and weeks before, in happy memories long days and weeks after it has passed.

To this glad Anniversary of the advent of our Savior, in God's kind Providence, we have all again come. Christmas joy again fills our homes and hearts. Again our sanctuary is wreathed, even in

this season of mid-winter, with flowers and forest green: symbols of the undying life which, even in this our wintry and dying world, Christ, by His incarnation and atonement, has "brought to light," and bestowed upon us; and again, rejoicing in the great salvation which His advent brought us, we are here to join together in our annual "Christmas Service", to His glory and praise.

To the Manger of Bethlehem let us all then, today, anew, repair. Around that humble "cradle" of our new-born Savior let us all again reverently and joyously now gather. As said the shepherds to each other, so let us today say: "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is there come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

Taking as our Christmas theme today, "The Lessons of the Manger," we see in that Manger of Bethlehem

I. A Revelation of Fulfilled Prophecy.

That manger is, indeed, the focal point toward which, for four thousand years in the world's history, the divine promises had all steadily converged. Toward that the expectant eye of humanity, down through all the centuries since creation's morn, looking for its Messiah, had been ever steadily directed. Of that "Pure Virgin's Child" patriarchs had thought, inpsired poets had sung, prophets had written. That "Manger-Cradled Babe" is He for Whom, as the promised "Consolation of Israel," the Saints of the Old Testament Dispensation all looked, and waited, and trusted in, and loved, and were saved by, and yet died without seeing. That new-born

Infant, nestling there upon Mary's breast, is the fulfillment of long ages of prophecy. Of Him, immediately already after the Fall, the promise was given: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And later the promise to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." And still later the promise to Jacob: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between His feet, until Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." And the promise afterward through Balaam: "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh; there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel." And farther on, the promise to Moses: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him shall ye hearken." And then the promise by Isaiah: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." And then also the promise to Daniel: "After three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself." And then the promise through Micah: "And thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." And that other promise: "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is: God with us." All these promises concerning the advent of the Messiah, foretelling the time, the

place, the circumstances, the manner of His coming, His parentage, His name, His wondrous nature, all these pointed forward to this Babe of Bethlehem, Child of Mary, Son of God. And now, at last, after four thousand years, in the divine fulness of time, in the Birth of that wondrous Child, born there in the stable of Bethlehem, all these glowing prophecies concerning His coming are fulfilled. The One of whom God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake, in all the times past, "by the fathers," has at last there made His advent. Promise and prophecy, type and shadow, are all now, at last, there in that fair child of Bethlehem's Manger, realized to the world's expectation. The promised Messiah is, there in that sleeping infant form, at last, come.

II. A Revelation Also of Remarkable Divine Providence.

In connection already with the place of His birth, great providences were at work. Old Testament prophecy had most plainly designated Bethlehem, "in the land of Judah," or Judea, in order to distinguish it from another Bethlehem, in Galilee, as the place where the Messiah should be born. Over seven hundred years before His birth had the Prophet Micah already so predicted. But Mary, His divinely-chosen Mother, lived in Nazareth, distant from Bethlehem sixty or seventy miles. Was there not danger, then, that this prophecy should fail, and that Jesus would be without this special evidence of His Messiahship? No. "All things are possible with God." "Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of His word shall ever

pass away till all be fulfilled." His counsels shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure. The hearts and wills of kings and emperors, as well as of peasants and subjects, are all alike in His hands, and He turns them all to accomplish as He chooses His pre-determined wise and holy purposes. So here: to bring about the fulfillment of the prophecy that Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, should be the place of the Savior's birth. The Jewish nation, since the days of Pompey, sixty years before, had paid tax, or tribute, to the Roman Government. Augustus was now the Roman Emperor. God put a thought into his mind. He touched his will, and influenced it to act: to act, by imperial decree, in his little distant province of Palestine. Not by his own will merely, not by chance, or merely by coincidence, but by God's agency over him, just at that time, neither sooner or later, he issues an order that a census must be taken of all the people of the province, in order that all may be taxed. Every one, therefore, is ordered, for this purpose, to proceed, at once, to the city, or home, of his lineal ancestor. At once the imperial decree is heralded all over the Roman world. That decree is proclaimed throughout Palestine, and in little Nazareth. Mary hears it. Joseph hears it. There is no choice. It must be obeyed. Being both of the lineage of David, and Bethlehem in Judea being the place where David was born, to Bethlehem, also, they must go. And so, as we read, "All went to be enrolled or taxed, every one into his own city; and Joseph, also, went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage

of David, to be taxed, with Mary, his espoused wife."

And so, there in Bethlehem, not in Nazareth, Jesus, the Redeemer, is born. How mighty, how all-controlling, how wonderful the divine Providence. How easily God effects His purposes. How certain of fulfillment every word that He has spoken.

Other providences also are manifest in the advent of our Savior: rays of divine wisdom, power and government shining out from that "Manger of Bethlehem," and revealing to us God's hand in all connected with the wondrous occurrence.

What providential wisdom, for example, in selecting just that special or particular time in our world's history for the advent into it of the Savior. As St. Paul says: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." That is: when once the full time, appointed by the Father, had come—the time for which God, by His providence, had been getting all things ready, the time which He saw was the proper and best time for His coming, then also did God send forth His Son—then, then only, no sooner, no later, was Jesus born.

And that that, all things considered, was the very best time possible in all the world's history, even we now can see. It was just the time, first, when all the Messianic prophecies manifestly centered in Him, and found in Him their clear and complete fulfillment, and when, also, there could be no reasonable doubt that in Him, and in Him only, they were all thus fulfilled. It was the fulness of time, also, or the very best time, because the world, then, after long seeking to lift up and save itself, and having

signally failed, had now come to feel as never before its own moral impotency and its moral need of a Divine Savior; and was also now, in some vague, unconscious way, looking for and expecting one. It was the fulness of time, also, because then was a time of universal peace. The temple of Janus, closed only in times of peace, was then shut, a rare event, having been thus closed but once in all previous Roman history. What an appropriate time, then, for the coming into our world of Him who is "the Prince of Peace."

But there were still other favorable conditions—conditions making that special time the best time. Communication between the different parts of the world was then more rapid and secure than it had been in any former period. The Jews then, as never before, were scattered into almost all lands, were acquainted with the promises, were looking for the Messiah, and were furnishing, in their synagogues, places and audiences for the apostles, their countrymen, afterward to preach the Gospel. The Greek language, also, then, as never so fully before, was the common language of no small part of the world, and could largely serve as a common medium for the spread of Christianity. The age was, also, an unusually intelligent age — an age intellectually capable of well proving and weighing the evidences of the new religion, and capable, also, of properly recording and transmitting it, so that succeeding ages might know the ground upon which their faith in it rests. For all these reasons, and for yet others, that was clearly "the fulness of time"—the time when it was best for the advent to occur—for Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, to be born.

But all these favorable circumstances were the result of a long line of providences. God's hand thus brought about all these auspicious conditions. For long centuries before He had been, in various ways and places, and through many agencies and persons, silently at work, getting, as it were, all things ready. And now, at the last, when all was once thus divinely prepared, then also He opened over our waiting earth the gracious Gate of Heaven, and out through it, and down from it, escorted by angelic hosts, came the long-promised world's Redeemer. The waiting manger at last was filled. A Savior at last was born. Then, and then for the first time, in all man's long history since the Fall, could the angel say to the shepherds and to all our race: "Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

III. A Marvelous Revelation of Divine Condescension and Love.

What unparalleled condescension that Manger, holding the Christ-child, reveals. What an infinite distance from the glory which from all eternity He had with the Father, down to that stable and stall, with the beasts of the field, there at Bethlehem. Ascend with me for a moment in thought to that world of ineffable splendor where dwelled and reigned, as Lord of all, this glorious Son of God, before He thus made His advent to our earth. See the divine and unclouded glory which there robes His Person. See the scepter of universal dominion there wielded by His omnipotent hand. See the vast

angelic host encircling His throne, and chanting his praise. See the lofty and resplendent archangels who there bow before Him, and rejoice to do His bidding. See Cherubim and Seraphim veil before Him their faces, and pay Him their highest honors. See Him there acknowledged as Maker and Governor of the universe, possessed of all divine power and wisdom, worshiped and served by all the pure and lofty intelligences of the skies. What greatness, what exaltation, what infinite and inconceivable glory were not His!

But come now with me from that scene of His preadvent glory, and together let us go back eighteen hundred years to this lowly scene of the Incarnation at Bethlehem. It is Advent Morning. The heavens, as with the shepherds we stand and gaze up toward them, suddenly open over us, and this glorious Son of God, as the world's Redeemer, comes forth from them. He comes clad in our own poor human form, as an infant or helpless babe. And whither, as he thus comes, does He bend His flight? Where is the place worthy of such an August Presence? Is it in Rome, the proud mistress of the world? Or in Athens, the republic of letters? Or in Corinth, the city of magnificent temples and palaces? Is it in these that His advent occurs? And how, with what form, in what manifestation of His coming and presence, does He appear? Arrayed in the glory which had been His from eternity? Clad in His native dignity of Deity? Swaying a divine scepter of might and majesty? Was it thus that He came? No. No. Not thus did He come. Not in Rome, nor in Corinth, nor in Athens. Not in a palace or temple. Not in angelic form, nor robed in

the supernatural splendors of the Godhead. Not thus did He come. But he comes clothed in the frail form of our humanity. He comes, making a stable His birthplace, and a stall or manger His cradle. He, the Great Eternal God, becomes a man. He, the Everlasting Creator, becomes the finite creature. He, the Divine King of Glory, becomes the weak and weeping babe. He, whom the Throne of the Universe once held, now lies cradled in the trough from which are fed the dumb beasts of the field. Wonder of wonders! There lies the mystery of all mysteries! The eternal comprised within the temporal; the infinite within the finite! All heaven emptied into earth! The King of kings, the Servant of the lowest servants! God, made man! The All-Holy becomes a sin offering, the Ever Blessed One a curse, for us!

> "Thou Dearest Babe! Those tiny hands
> That played with Mary's hair
> The weight of all the mighty world
> That very moment bare."

Wondrous condescension! Amazing humiliation! Thus low, O Blessed Savior, even down to the manger, and afterward yet lower, even to the cross and to the grave, didst Thou stoop, in order to raise us up out of our wretchedness and guilt, and to enable us to share with Thee Thine eternal glory!

And what infinite divine love, as the spring or source of all this astounding divine condescension, that manger there at Bethlehem also reveals. Immeasurable and inexplicable love was the foundation of all the blessed Advent fact. The manger, with its Christ-child, was made and filled for us by divine

love. "He loved us, and gave Himself for us." The whole great mystery of the incarnation is all an expression of divine eternal love. "God so loved the world that He gave His Son."

From our contemplation of this blessed fact of the Advent of our Savior as the Babe of Bethlehem, there come to us, now, in conclusion, both many precious Christian lessons and many practical Christian duties.

1. Christ was born in Bethlehem.

Has He also been spiritually born in thee, my hearer? That birth of His there at Bethlehem will avail thee nothing unless He is born also in thy heart as a new divine spiritual life by the quickening power of the Holy Ghost. He was once there cradled in the manger; He must be cradled also, in order to be indeed thy Savior, in the chamber of thy soul. For two births are necessary to thy salvation: His birth in Bethlehem then, and thy birth into His spiritual kingdom now. Hast thou, then, been thus spiritually born? Is the Christ-child thus cradled in thy soul? This is the vital question for each one of us to ask at each returning Christmas-tide. For—

"Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
If He's not born in thee, thy soul is still forlorn."

Our Christmas prayer, then, today, should be:

"Within us, Babe Divine,
Be born, and make us Thine;
Within our souls reveal
Thy love and power to heal;
In us be born, and make our hearts
Thy cradle and Thy shrine."

2. The Advent of Christ was the expression to us of the love of Christ for us.

Beholding that love of His for thee, thus revealed in His incarnation, dost thou, in return, now also love Him? Does the tender, divine affection beaming forth so winningly from that Bethlehem Manger, and smiling out so attractively upon thee from the pure face of that Holy Child there cradled, win in grateful response thy affection? It was a great and wondrous love which thus brought that Holy Babe from the skies and laid Him there so low among the beasts of the stall. It deserves in return thy love—thy purest, highest, most enduring love. Give that Christ-child, then, thy love. This is Christmas Day. With the shepherds hasten lovingly to His lowly manger. With the magi from the Orient carry to Him thy best treasures. With the holy angels chant to Him thy loudest and sweetest song of praise. Thus love Him who so greatly loved thee, and thus give thyself to Him who, on that Christmas morn, in the city of David, nearly nineteen centuries ago, gave Himself for thee.

3. Christ in His Advent was the gift of God to our dark and lost world.

It was an infinite and most blessed gift, the best gift God had to give, the gift even of His own and only Divine Son.

From this divine example of giving, let us, as the children of God, learn to give. The great sinning and sorrowing world, whose sad condition thus led the Divine Father of us all on that first Christmas Day to give His only Son to be the world's teacher and savior, still needs help. It needs today, from us

all, the best gifts that we have to give to it: our Christian help, both for body and soul. It needs the knowledge of Christ: impart to it that knowledge. It needs to be led back again to God, its forsaken Divine Father: take it by the hand and guide it back again to Him. It needs the Gospel: give it the Gospel. It is lost and wandering in sin, and needs moral guidance; it is enshrouded in spiritual darkness, and needs light; it is filled with sorrow, and needs sympathy and comfort; it is crushed and fallen under the burdens of life, and needs to be lifted up; it is tossed and wretched, and needs rest and peace of soul; it is dying, and needs life, life in Christ, eternal life. All these the poor world needs. in every possible way, then, give this Savior, born at Bethlehem, to the world. As God loved our world, so let us love it. As He pitied it, so let us pity it. As He, in the advent of Christ, stooped even from the skies to lift it up to Himself, and rescue it from its moral ruins and death, so also let us do. Let us learn from Him to be saviors of men. Let the sweet virtues of love and sympathy and good will and charity and compassion, which filled the divine heart and moved to the advent of the Savior, also now and always fill and move our hearts. Think of the poor on this glad Christmas day, and relieve their wants; of the hungry, and feed them; of the naked, and clothe them; of the sorrowing, and comfort them; of the friendless and homeless, and sympathize with them; of the erring, and seek to reclaim them; of the tempted, and strengthen them; of the fallen, and lift them; of the bereaved and mourning, whose homes and hearts on Christmas day are doubly sad because of vacant chairs and silent voices and loved

ones gone, who made other Christmas days bright with their joy and love. Think of all these today; always think of them; and always bless them with your tenderness, and interest, and sympathy, and help, and love. Thus will you make perennial in human hearts the joy of the first glad Christmas day, and thus will you perpetuate in the world the blessedness of the Advent over which the angels first sang.

4. The Advent of Christ awakened holy joy.

Mary, His Virgin Mother, as she gazed upon Him, sang anew her Magnificat, exclaiming: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." The shepherds, returning from the manger, "glorified and praised God for all the things which they had heard and seen." The aged Simeon, who had long waited for the consolation of Israel, taking up in his arms this Infant Redeemer, "blessed God and said: Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Anna, the prophetess, beholding Him, "gave thanks to God and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." And the angelic host, on that holy morn of the Nativity, hung with trembling joy over that Manger-cradled Babe, and chanted in loudest strains their "Gloria in excelsis," shouting "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men."

Thus were both heaven and earth, angels and men, glad when the Christ-child, Son of Mary and Son of God, made His advent into the world. Then holy

joy filled all holy souls, all pure spiritual beings, in all the wide domain of God.

So let holy joy, deep, pure Christmas gladness fill and thrill our hearts today over that blessed event. Let us, today and always, above all other joys, rejoice in that coming to earth as our Saviour of the Son of God. For, think what a coming that was! What an errand of love and mercy! He came to tell us of God, to make us conscious of our guilt and alienation from Him, of His fatherly love and pity for us, of His desire to be reconciled to us and to have us come back again from our moral departure from Him: came, by His holy life, to teach us how to live: came, by His gentle and unselfish and loving spirit, to rebuke selfishness and unkindness to each other, and to fill our hearts with love and tenderness and kindliness one to the other: came to renew and sanctify us, to strengthen and comfort us, to fit us for living and prepare us for dying: came Himself to die and to sleep in the grave and to enter Paradise in order for us to atone for sin, to rob death of its sting and the grave of its gloom, and to open for us the portals of life and immortality. To do all this for us, to grant us all these infinite blessings, was His gracious purpose in coming into our lost world. All this enters into the divine import of the Advent.

Ought we not, on Christmas Day, as Christians, then, be glad? Ought not the great fact of the incarnation always fill our hearts with holy joy? "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift." "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His ser-

vant David." Thus let us ever be joyful over the Advent into our world of the Savior, and ever, while life and being last, let us pour forth to Christ, who thus humbled Himself for our salvation, even to the manger and to the cross, our most grateful love, our most obedient service, and our most fervent praise.

III.

THE SONG OF THE ANGELS.

Christmas.

COLLECT.

Mercifully hear, O Lord, the prayers of Thy people; that as they rejoice in the advent of Thine only-begotten Son according to the flesh, so when He cometh a second time in His Majesty, they may receive the reward of eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

III.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

LUKE, ii:13, 14.

THE Advent of our Savior was first announced to the shepherds by a single angel from heaven. The record reads: "Lo, an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them: Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

Soon, however, as we read, a great multitude of the angelic host appeared upon the scene, and joined in chanting their joy over the glad event. "Suddenly," says the record, "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

What a glorious song of praise that must have been: music such as never, before or since, has fallen upon listening human ears: a sublime celestial doxology: heaven's own harmonious orchestra, singing in entrancing strains the very melodies of the skies.

"Calm on the listening air of night
Came heaven's melodious strains,
Where wild Judea stretches far
Her silver-mantled plains.

The joyous hills of Palestine
Send back the glad reply,
And greet, from all their holy heights
This Day-spring from on high."

Sweet burst of seraphic melody it must, indeed, have been. Those shepherds, as they heard it, must, one is led to think, have held their very breath with joy, and hoped that the heavenly chorus would burst upon them again and again, and that this sweet music of the skies would continue to fall upon their ears forever and ever. Soon this celestial choir was, however, again gone. Soon these angel visitors to our earth had again returned to the skies. Soon the music, the song, had all again been hushed, and the heavenly singers had gone back to their home above; and, as the pearly portals closed after them, the air over those Bethlehem hills again was still, and all was again as it had been before.

Such were the circumstances under which was sung this "Song of the Angels" when Christ was born, singing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

It is noteworthy that, in the whole history of man, since his creation, this was the one only time that the angels did thus sing here upon earth. The songs of angels were raised at the Creation; for then, "the Morning Stars sang together, and," as we read, "all the Sons of God shouted for joy." But, in all their visits to this world of ours afterward, *i. e.*, after sin had once entered it, and had marred and ruined the

work of God, although they were often sent upon errands to our earth, we never, until the Advent of Christ, hear or read of them singing here on earth. After the fall of man, they seem, whenever they came down to this world of ours, this earth of sorrow, to have had no heart to sing, to have been like persons in deep affliction, unable to raise a single note of gladness; and, before they could sing, it seemed to be necessary for them first to get away from this polluted atmosphere of sin and beyond the reach of fallen mortal ears. At the end of four thousand years, however, the strains of angelic music once more broke upon our world. When Christ was born, then angels could again sing. Because in that birth of the divine-human Child, they saw the divine remedy for this ruin of sin over which they so long had mourned. They then, for the first time, saw hope of salvation for lost and fallen man. They then saw God Himself come down to recover our lost world again to Himself. And then these unselfish, holy, and happy angels again could sing, and did sing: sang their second earthly song, and their last, probably, until God, finally, in the end of time, shall create "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness:" after which, probably, they will strike their golden harps as freely here below, among men, as they now strike them before the throne of God in heaven.

But how impressively this long silence in song of the angel's here upon earth, reveals to us their abhorrence of sin. Though they were often sent on errands from heaven to earth, and though the very essence of their being is praise, yet, during all this long period, they were mute when they came to our

sin-cursed world; the presence of sin, and the ruin caused by sin, saddened them into silence; nor could they ever find heart to sing until the sinless Savior was at last born, and sin was again about to be taken away, and sinners were again to be renewed and saved; and then, in one grand burst of melody, they again sang, saying: "Good tidings, good tidings, good tidings of great joy: a Savior is born. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

In the use of this Song of the Angels, this *Hymnus Angelicus*, the Christian Church has, from the very beginning of her history, poured forth her praise in her public worship, is doing so today, and will probably do so even down to the very end of time. Ever since the heavenly choir, floating there on happy wing over Bethlehem's plain, chanted it as their doxology, the Church has also chanted it, and in loud and sweet refrain has echoed and re-echoed it back again to the skies. At first, as history tells us, she thus used as her "Gloria in Excelsis" only the few words sung by the angels, as recorded by St. Luke, only what is called the minor doxology. But later, because of heresies which sprung up, especially Arianism, which denied the true deity of Christ, in order that she might, in this respect, offer a pure worship, and in order to condemn heresy, she made repeated additions to it, amplifying it finally, early in the fourth century, into its present most beautiful and orthodox form. For fully fifteen hundred years, therefore, in both the Eastern and Western Church, by Greek and Roman and Protestant Churches, in all lands and languages, the Holy Catholic Church, as the undivided body of Christ, has joyously wor-

shipped Him as her common Lord, in the continued use of this angelic song, in one unbroken voice, crying out: "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

And of this use of the angelic song, in her public worship, the Church, in all these many years, has never wearied. As part of her liturgy, she has never grown tired of it, or outlived it, and never will. These precious old liturgical forms, on the contrary, grow ever more precious to her. They grow more dear to her with each succeeding period of her history. Rooted in the blessed facts and truths of God's word, hallowed by the memory that God's saints have worshipped in their use during all the Christian centuries, beautiful in their diction as a poem of heaven, helpful, as long experience proves, as aids to worship, as wings upon which to lift herself in devotion up to God, the Church, today, more than ever, prizes and loves and uses these ancient forms of Christian service, these beautiful and holy liturgies of the past.

But why, let us now ask, did the angels thus sing when Christ was born? Why did they thus take such a profound interest in the Advent of Christ, and sing, as they did, their glad songs over it?

They did so, I answer, first, because they knew the greatness and the glory of that Being who had thus come to our earth as a Savior, and they could realize the infinite condescension of the act, as man can not realize it.

It is said that one of England's early kings was

once driven into exile, and that, while thus in exile, he disguised himself, and was employed by a peasant to perform the humblest and most menial services. And it is further said, that when he was found, at last, in this condition by the princes of his realm, who had known him in his former royal condition, they fell on their knees and wept at his degradation; while the peasant, not knowing his true character or former glory, had treated him with the coarsest familiarity. Thus it is with us and the angels in regard to the Advent of Christ. We are like that peasant with the exiled king, unable to realize His former infinite glory. But the angels, who had often seen Him in that glory, who had often veiled their faces before Him, who knew His greatness, pay Him their highest honors. And hence they came with Him, as a celestial escort, down, in His advent, from heaven to earth, and, long as they can, they worship Him and chant His praise. This song of the angels, on that advent-night, is, therefore, a song of honor to Christ: a song of adoration to Him, who, although now the Son of Man, had been, they knew, and was still, also, the Son of God.

But these angels also knew the infinite evil of sin, from which the Savior thus came to rescue man, far better than man possibly now can know it; and this again was the cause of their Advent song.

They were glad to know that a remedy for this dreadful evil of sin was about being provided; that now man need no longer, unless he chose, go down under its power to eternal death. This song of the angels, therefore, was a song, also, of disinterested love and sympathy with man; a song of joy over the salvation which the Advent brought to our sinful

and suffering world. Knowing our misery through sin, and knowing that in that Cradle of Bethlehem was the divine antidote for it all, they now burst into song; they now broke their long silence of four thousand years, and, in a holy Advent hymn, a heavenly Te Deum, the sweet echoes of which still pulsate lovingly around our lost world, they praised and glorified God.

And then, once more, these angels knew also, as we do not, the happiness of that heaven, up to which the Advent of Christ would raise our fallen race; and this again was a cause of their song.

When they thought of the millions who, through this coming of the Savior into our world, would become their associates in the home of the blessed—would, with them, share in the unspeakable bliss of that upper world—their hearts overflowed with unselfish joy, and, rushing down from the celestial heights, and keeping company with the one lone character who had begun the song, they swell the good news into one long, loud chorus of gladness, saying: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will toward man."

But let us study, for a few moments, the song itself which these angels thus sang.

They first ascribe "Glory to God," *i. e.,* praise and honor to God for this coming down of His Eternal Son to earth to redeem and save our lost world. Or, the words may possibly mean that glory will be to God from this redeeming act which now, in the Advent, is begun. Creation glorified Him; but this work of redemption, they perhaps meant, will glorify Him more. This is the crowning display of His glory. His condescension, His love, His justice, the

honor of His law, the stability of His government—all are here, in this work of Incarnation, displayed more than in anything else. "Glory to God," they therefore sing, "for the Advent."

And not only do they sing: "Glory to God," but "Glory to God," they sing, "in the Highest," *i. e.*, either in the highest strains, or possible manner; or, among the highest, *i. e.*, among the loftiest angels of God; or in the highest heavens, indicating that the praise should not be confined to the earth, but should spread throughout the universe; or they may be equivalent to saying: "Let the Most High God, the highest and greatest of all Beings, let Him be praised for thus condescending to rescue fallen man." Whichever of these interpretations we adopt, the meaning is, not only let God be praised for the Advent, but let Him be thus praised for it in the highest, fullest, most perfect and universal manner. Let heaven and earth both unite in thanksgiving for it. Both angels and men, let all adore Him, is the meaning, for this His unspeakable gift.

But the song goes on: "And on earth peace." That is: glory or praise to God, for the Gospel, this Advent of Christ, shall bring peace. This new-born Savior is the predicted "Prince of Peace." The world is at war with God, sinners are at enmity with their Maker, and with each other; "there is no peace to the wicked." But this God-Man, cradled there in the manger, is come to make peace between God and man, between man and his fellow-man. Has Christ brought peace to earth? Yes. In various ways He makes or brings peace to our warring world: by His atonement making satisfaction for man's sins; by His Holy Spirit, renewing and sanctifying the nature of

man; by His personal and holy example, teaching man how to be at peace both with self and God and his fellow-man; by the blessed and peace-breathing spirit and principles of His holy religion, a religion whose essential basis is love, and whose very life is to seek the welfare of humanity and to do good unto all men; creating feelings of peace toward each other, influencing them to lay aside their differences, to seek each other's welfare; to banish envy, malice, pride, lust, passion and covetousness, fruitful causes of strife and war among men. In all these many and various ways the Advent of Christ, as the angelic song here declares, brings the sweet blessing of peace into our disturbed and distressed world.

But notice the conclusion of this angelic song: "Good will toward men."

"Glory to God in the highest" is the meaning, for in this coming of His Son into the world, He manifests His good will toward men. The gift of the Savior shows to man His love for him. Thus humbling Himself, as He does in the Advent, thus coming to earth, thus taking on Himself the nature of man, thus being born into the world, cradled in a manger, living in poverty, subjecting Himself to all human privations and sufferings, and, at last, suffering even the shameful death of the cross: all this revealed God's "good will toward men"—His love for them, His pity, His infinite desire to save and bless them. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend, but God commendeth His love for us in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And for this, sing the angels, let God be praised. "Glory," they cry, "be to God in the highest," for all that He has thus done. Glory

to Him for the Advent. Glory to Him "in the highest" for it. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Thus did the angels rejoice and sing over the birth, at Bethlehem, of Jesus, over God's great gift to the world of a Savior. Thus did they express their holy Advent gladness over the incarnation of the divine Redeemer.

And yet it was not for them that this wondrous mystery of the incarnation took place.

> "The Savior did not join
> Their nature to His own;
> For them He shed no blood divine,
> Nor breathed a single groan.
>
> They never sunk so low,
> They are not raised so high;
> They never knew such depths of woe,
> Such heights of majesty."

No! they needed no Savior. And yet what interest they feel in this Advent of Christ! What gladness it awakens in them! What rapturous songs of praise it calls forth from their souls! How it fills and kindles their whole being into highest admiration! What an unending wonder, and study, and fathomless mystery it is to them! "Which things," says St. Peter, "the angels desire to look into"—desire to fully understand and know, but can not; for to them, as, through all eternity, it will be to us, this truth, "God manifest in the flesh" will be the "great Mystery of Godliness."

But if these unfallen angels thus rejoice over the advent to man of a Savior, how much more should

not man himself? How much more should not we? That Incarnate God became thus incarnate to be our Savior. For us He was thus born.

Let each of us, then, more than angels, welcome this our incarnate Savior. Let us make room for Him in our hearts. Let us receive Him, love Him, trust Him, live for Him, be saved by Him. Adore the Redeemer for His gracious coming. Take up the angelic song, and waft it, on waves of holy melody, back to the skies from which He came. Give this incarnate Christ your purest love, your humblest homage, your best and richest offerings of thankfulness. Praise Him, praise Him, for He, indeed, is infinitely worthy of the highest praise of all the children of men.

"To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
Be honor, praise, and glory given,
By all on earth and all in heaven."

IV.

TRUSTING UNDER GOD'S SHELTERING WING.

New Year.

COLLECT.

Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as are right; that we, who can not do anything that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

IV.

"I will trust in the covert of Thy wings."
PSALM, lxii :4.

THIS beautiful figure of the soul trusting itself, or hiding itself, for refuge and protection under the outstretched wings of God, as the young bird hides itself under the sheltering wing of the mother bird, is one which was a favorite with David, and which he frequently employs.

"Keep me," he prays, "as the apple of Thine eye; hide me under the shadow of Thy wing." "How excellent is Thy loving kindness, O God," he cries, "therefore, the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in Thee; yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge until these calamities be overpast." "I will abide in Thy tabernacle forever; I will trust in the covert of Thy wings." "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust." Thus beautifully does David express his trust.

And this confidence or trust in God which David thus exercised, and thus beautifully expresses, it is our privilege and duty, as God's children, also to exercise and express. God is as worthy of our confidence as He was of David's; and as worthy of all

men's as He is of ours. Weak, frail, helpless as in himself man is, he needs such an Almighty Supporter and Helper; and what he needs, God is and possesses. What man is unable to do, God can do. What man lacks, God can supply. Trust in God is, therefore, both man's duty and interest, and rests upon foundations both rational and moral of the most solid possible character.

What are some of these foundations? I answer:

I. A Deep and Firm Conviction of the Universal Providence of God.

The fact of such providence even reason and nature teach us, and with especial clearness do the sacred Scriptures teach it. They declare all things that transpire as being embraced in its circle. The physical universe, in all its vast domain; the rise and fall of nations; the successive experiences and vicissitudes of the Church; all the revolutions of State; all the occurrences in the history of each family; all the unnumbered experiences which make up the life of each individual; the Bible represents all these as being included within God's plans, and as being either caused or permitted by His all-embracing and overruling providence.

And, hence, firmly believing what this word of God thus reveals and asserts concerning the divine providence, the Christian, in this universal or particular divine providence, recognizes a solid and firm ground for unwavering trust in God. This assured providence of God is one of the outstretched divine wings under whose "covert" he ever trustingly hides. Recognizing this fact of the divine

providence in all things, he sees that, absolutely, or independently of God, chance or accident or natural law or human agency or satanic power, rules in nothing—the supreme hand of God is in and over all things. He regards all events, of every possible character, great or small, calamitous or joyful, as simply so many necessary parts in one of God's great plans; as nothing more than so many necessary connecting links in that one great providential chain by which God is binding all the universe, both of mind and of matter, to His own eternal and omnipotent throne. And, hence, come what will, the true and trusting child of God feels secure. Is there war, for example, in the land? Is there danger threatening the Church? Is society bleeding and torn by civil revolution? Are ghastly famine and pestilence mowing down their millions? Is there financial depression over all the land? Is labor unobtainable, and wages low, and bread scarce? Is the hand of poverty pressing heavily upon him? Has sickness prostrated him? Has death broken the family circle, and is his heart bleeding under bereavement? In the midst of it all, the Christian sees the wise, loving, all-governing providence of God, the almighty and all-gracious hand of his own divine heavenly Father; and, in this assurance that God is thus in all that befalls him, his soul is filled with abiding calmness. Amid it all he is sustained by an unshaken sense of security, of divine presence and help and blessing; and hence, casting himself in new confidence upon God, he exclaims: "I will trust in the covert of Thy wing."

II. The Revealed Character and Promises of God.

How infinite in its perfection is not the essential and abiding character of God, and what a granite base for our trust does it not afford? His wisdom, how unerring!—and how unerring, therefore, also His knowledge of all that we really need, and of all that is really best for us. His power, how unlimited! —and how unlimited, therefore, His ability, also, to do for us all that He sees to be best for us. And His love, how infinite!—and hence how sure we may be that He will neither do anything Himself toward us, nor permit anything to be done, which will not, in some way, result in our good, and which will not bring to us a blessing greater, beyond all comparison, than all that we may incidentally suffer in His providential dealings with us, and through which we rise up to it.

This, now, is God's character. This is the kind of God that our God is. His attributes are all infinite. His wisdom, power, love, a divine trinity of perfection, are all pledged in our behalf, and are all consecrated to the holy and blessed mission of doing for us, as His children, the highest possible good: developing in us the largest possible perfection of character and wealth of personal happiness, both in time and in eternity, within the omnipotent stretch of His being.

Is not that a divine character worthy of trust? Is not that a divine rock upon which we may all safely build? Is not that a wing under which we may all ever securely hide? In view of it may we not all wisely say: "O God, being what Thou art, under the covert of Thy wing I will trust!"

In connection with this infinitely trustworthy character of God, think, also, of the promises of God. With such a God as their author, and with such a God to make good all that He has promised, what a basis for trust these promises are. Precious and numerous are the promises of God to all that trust Him. Recall some of them. "Trust in the Lord and do good," is one of them, "so shalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed." Another is: "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." Still another is: "As thy day so shall thy strength be." Another: "My grace shall be sufficient for thee." And yet another: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." These, and hundreds more like them, are the immutable promises or pledges of God, addressed to all who make Him their refuge and trust. And shall we not believe these promises? And ought we not? They are the most solemn pledges and guarantees of a Divine Being so holy that He can not possibly deceive or disappoint or be unfaithful to us, so immutable that what He has uttered or spoken to us stands forever unchanged and sure of fulfillment, so loving that He would ever infinitely rather do us good than withhold good from us. The promises of such a Being, are they not a sufficient ground for our trust? Under the covert of such outstretched wings of divine assurance may we not securely hide?

III. The Universal Experience and Testimony of All Who Have Ever Really Trusted in Him.

Look at some such instances of trust in God. Noah, for example, trusted Him: and, lo, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the

floods rose above the highest hills, and millions of the ungodly sunk into a watery grave, sheltered and shut in the ark by God's protecting hand, and watched over by God's ever-observing eye, he and his household outrode the deluge in safety. The children of Israel, standing there upon the shores of the Red Sea, with danger and difficulty on every hand, trusted in Him, and cried to Him for the help they needed, and, lo, by the word of His power, a way was opened for them even through the waters, and they were delivered out of all their distresses. Elijah, alone yonder in the wilderness, in time of famine trusted Him, and, lo, even the ravens, divinely bidden, come flying with bread to feed him. So David trusted in Him, and, lo, Saul's anger, and Absalom's rebellion, and Shimei's curses, and Ahithophel's treachery, were all divinely circumvented and counteracted and made to fall harmlessly at David's feet. Daniel, also, trusted in God, and, lo, the lions' mouths were, at once, divinely locked, their fury tamed, and unharmed the prophet walked up and down their otherwise fatal den. The three Hebrew children also trusted Him, and, lo, even the furnace, heated with a sevenfold intensified heat, loses, at once, all its destroying power, and they wrap the flames unburned and even unscorched about them. Peter also trusted Him, and, lo, an angel is sent from heaven to strike off his chains, and fling open his prison doors, and set him free. In all these instances, and in hundreds more, recorded all through the Bible, there is one continuous exhibition of God's protection of His saints, and of the safety of all who put their trust in Him. All God's illustrious saints, whose biography the Bible

records, hid themselves in time of danger or trouble under the covert of His wings, and were sheltered from the passing storm.

And this safety and blessedness of thus trusting God our own experience, also, as God's children, I am sure, confirms. We, too, have had our trials, our afflictions, our seasons of want, of struggle, of danger, of pain, of bereavement. In these seasons of trial, like birds, we have sheltered ourselves in God as our refuge. We hid ourselves under the covert of His wings. Were we disappointed? Have not God's promises been verified to us in our experience? Our wants: has He not supplied them? Our pathway of life: has He not gone before us, and opened it up for us? Our duties: has He not strengthened us for them? Our fears: has He not dispelled them? Our burdens: has He not lightened them? Our sorrows: has He not comforted us in them? Our entire experience: has He not been wise and kind and good to us in all that has befallen us? Does not our own experience in the past of God's trustworthiness justify our full trust in Him in the future? The memory of how He has helped us, ought not that assure us that He also always will help us? The divine goodness to us in the years gone by, is not that a guarantee of all needed divine goodness to us in the years to come? It surely is. From the past we may always take comfort and hope for the future. With David we may say: "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." And, thus, drawing encouragement for our faith in God from His unfailing love to us in the past, we may also, with David again say: "Because

Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice." Or, in the words of our text, "I will trust in the covert of Thy wings."

IV. One Other Ground or Basis of Trust in God, Which I Yet Mention, Is What May Be Called the Necessities of the Case.

There are many other objects in which men put their trust and place their hope for the comfort and happiness which they need and seek, but there is not one of them which, sooner or later, will not disappoint their trust and hope. Wealth: how uncertain its possession, how unsatisfying its treasures even while we do possess them. Worldly pleasures: how empty and hungry they leave the soul, and how unquenched is still its thirst even after drinking their deepest and fullest draughts. Popularity: how fickle and vanishing it is, enthroning and crowning its idol today, casting it aside and treading it under foot tomorrow. And even friendship, the love and trust in each other of congenial souls, of hearts wedded and blended in holy unity: even that, how often it disappoints. How often even the warmest friendships are broken, and how often hearts that once beat in perfect unison become estranged and even filled toward each other with hate. And domestic joys, the sweet circle of home, where, more safely than anywhere else, we look and trust for our purest and deepest joys, how even these also often disappoint us; what sorrows come to our homes, what hopes in our home life are blighted, what changes time effects in our family circles; what vacancies death produces in them; how, one after another, the loved ones of our homes slip away from us, and we

from them, and, in time, the home is broken up, and strangers fill the places we and ours once filled.

And thus is it with everything earthly. There is absolutely nothing here below that we can safely and continuously and satisfactorily trust. The best of earth's suports is, at best, but a wretched prop upon which to rest supremely our heart's affections. In the end, when we need them most, they will prove broken reeds, which will snap beneath us, and, if we have nothing better to cling to, will leave us to sink down into deep and utter despair.

But, unsafe and vain as it thus is to trust supremely these earthly objects, there is One Being whom we may all securely trust. There is One Being who is, indeed, our friend, who will always abide with us, who will never, in any of our hopes and expectations, deceive or disappoint us. That being is God. In Him we all, I repeat, may most safely trust. For He both can and will do for us all that He has promised, and all that we need, both in the life that now is and in that eternal life which is to come. As the apostle expresses it: "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Thus is God worthy of the trust of His saints. These are grounds, or foundations, upon which we may safely base our faith in Him. And, because of what God thus is, and has promised, and what His saints in all ages, and we ourselves, have found and experienced Him to be, and because He alone can be to us all that we need, because, I say, of all these rich grounds of encouragement, we may all ever resort to Him as our refuge and strength, as our joy and help,

in all life's vicissitudes, and say with the psalmist: "Under the covert of Thy wings will I trust."

Thus may God's children, who are poor in this world's goods, trust in Him. What though they are poor, is not God rich? Has He ever forsaken any who were honest, and economical, and industrious, and used faithfully the means of self-help in their power, and when every way of relief seemed closed still held on in trust to Him? Never! And He never will. "I have been young, and now am old," says David, "yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." He who rained manna from heaven for His people in the wilderness, and gave them water to drink out of the flinty rock; who commissioned the ravens to supply the prophet of Horeb with needed food by the brook Cherith; who multiplied the widow's barrel of meal and cruse of oil so that she had an abundance; who increased the loaves and fishes into plenty for all the gathered thousands; and who, by the mouth of His Son, has taught us all to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread:" He surely will also always provide for us all that we may need. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Let the poor, therefore, say: "Under the covert of Thy wings," O God, "will I trust."

In God may the discouraged also trust. The true Christian has often, in life's experiences, much to discourage him: in himself, on account of his own spiritual imperfections, his slow progress in holiness, his temptations, his doubts, his fears, and outside of himself, because of the evils in the world, and the adversities and trials that befall him on every hand.

But, "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees," O discouraged Christian. He that has God as his "portion," as his "defense," as his "help," as his "Savior," what room has he for despondency, or doubt or discouragement? Not any. But, in all his trials, be what they may, instead of yielding to fear and depression, joyously, on wings of faith, he can rise up to God, and, with David, sing: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

And thus, also, may the convicted and penitent trust in God. They especially may do so. For, here in the gospel, God sets forth Christ as the penitent's sure ground of trust, and bids all believe in Him and be saved. And hence, burdened with sin, trembling under the consciousness of his guilt, fleeing from the wrath which is to come, to the cross of Christ every convicted and inquiring sinner may securely flee, and looking up to its outstretched arms of pardon and mercy, say: "Under the covert of Thy wings I will trust."

In God, also, may His afflicted saints thus ever trust. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. But, as we have seen, there is a loving and wise providence in them all. God orders them for us; determines their character, their severity, their continuance; and He also, with them, gives grace to bear them, and grace especially also to sanctify them and make them blessed means to their eternal salvation. "All things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose"; and hence, even when God's dealings

with them are darkest and most mysterious, confiding in His wisdom and love, the child of God may still feel secure, and sing: "I will trust under the covert of Thy wings."

And finally, the dying Christian may also thus securely trust God. Many have in their dying hour trusted God, relied on His promises, rested their souls on the mercy which He offers in Christ, and, sustained and cheered and gladdened by this their trust or faith in God, the vale of death was transfigured before them into a pathway of glory, and, as earth receded from their vision, heaven, in increasing radiance, broke in upon them. And thus, in their dying hour, may all God's saints trust Him: hiding themselves under the covert of His wings, the wings of His grace in Christ; and, thus sheltered, they will pass unharmed, joyous, triumphant, through death, up to the bliss of their eternal life. Thus, O Christian, by such holy trust in God, when your dying hour once comes, will you also pass from earth to the skies. Your faith will then give you the victory, dispelling the darkness of the death valley, lighting it up with the radiance of heaven, filling it with the echoes of your triumphant challenge: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Thus trusting ourselves, beloved, under the sheltering wing of God, let us now go forth into the untried and unknown experiences of the New Year, upon which we, today, enter. "Have faith in God": take that with you, today, as your New-Year motto. Each day of this New Year walk by faith or trust in God. Say daily to yourself, whatever befalls you: "God lives, God reigns, God cares for me, God will

help me, God will make everything, until He brings me at last to glory, to work together for my good: hence, come what will, joy or sorrow, health or sickness, riches or poverty, life or death, with God as my keeper, I am safe, both for time and eternity."

May such holy faith in God be awakened on this New Year Sunday in the heart of each one of us. Then, let our experiences be what they may, this New Year will be to us a blessed one. With God thus as our portion, every day will add new joy to our cup of bliss. Every trial and sorrow will then be transformed for us into an angel of blessing. And then even death itself, should it, this year, come to any one of us, will only be to us a triumphant translation to the infinite joys of the life eternal.

V.

OBEDIENCE THE WAY TO SAVING KNOWLEDGE.

Epiphany.

COLLECT.

O Lord, we bessech Thee mercifully to receive the prayers of Thy people who call upon Thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

V.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

JOHN, vii:17.

OUR Savior, as we learn from the context, was teaching in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Jews, as they listened to the profound spiritual and divine truths which he uttered, were astonished, and the ground of their astonishment consisted in the fact that, as they all well knew, He was uneducated. Unlike their rabbis and their scribes, He had never enjoyed the advantages of scholastic training, had never been educated in the schools, was unlettered and destitute of the mental discipline and power of address which come, ordinarily, only as the result of years of patient devotion to books and study. And yet, as they had to confess, both in matter and manner, He was the prince of orators. His knowledge of divine truth surpassed that of all their wisest religious teachers. His manner of expressing or proclaiming that truth was also one of singular and thrilling power. Even His enemies were compelled to acknowledge: "Never man spake like this man." Amazed at all this display of wisdom and knowledge of divine things, they ask: "How is this? Whence has this man this knowledge? How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

Jesus now answers their question. There is, He tells them, no especial mystery about it. For, in the first place, He is what He says He is, viz: divine, the Son of God, expressly come from God in order to reveal these great divine truths to man. Being thus divine, He, of course, knows them; and His very ability thus to speak, as He does, of divine things, having never been taught them in the schools, is proof of His divinity, and authentication of His Messiahship.

But, apart from all this, and considering Himself only in His human nature, as a mere man, there is, also, he adds, a second explanation of this marvelous knowledge of His of divine things, at which they so much wondered. The knowledge of God which He possessed, and which so astonished them, has come to Him in His human nature, He tells them, largely as the moral result and reward of His cheerful and constant obedience of God. In so far as He, in His human nature, knew the will of God, He also always promptly did it. As He had His Father's commandments, He kept them. As He possessed the truth, He loved it, cherished it, spake it. And by doing all this, by thus constantly putting and keeping Himself in this receptive and obedient relation to God, and to the revelation of His will which God was thus making to Him, He was always, also, as the moral result of it all, coming into a clearer assurance of the truth, and into a firmer and fuller apprehension of God. Obedience to God is the way, He means, by which, in His human nature, or considered merely as a man, He had come into His deep and wonderful knowledge of God.

But this way of coming into a large and assured knowledge of God and of spiritual and divine things, is open, he now adds, to them as much as to Him. As a means of coming to a knowledge of God and divine truth it is available to every man. "If any man," He says, "will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." Or, as the "Revised Version" reads: "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God or whether I speak from myself." His meaning is: This is a universal law which will hold good in the experience of every human being who will avail himself of it. He may know God, and the revelation which God makes of Himself, by obeying God. In divine things obedience is the way of knowledge. Divine truth, if obeyed, as far as already divinely revealed to a soul, will authenticate itself to that soul as divine, and will reveal to it, and lead it out into the possession of, other and greater and more precious divine truths. The soul that knows anything of God, and obeys what it knows, shall ever also know more of Him, and, by obeying the truth which it knows, shall ever, also, go on to a larger knowledge, thus advancing even eternally into greater and still greater knowledge and into deeper and still deeper apprehensions of the infinite preciousness and fulness of divine and eternal things. If any man, therefore, wants to know the truth, let him obey the truth: let him put it to the one simple test of personal experience and personal practice. If any man, *e. g.*, doubts, or is uncertain whether, as I claim, I am the Christ, whether my teachings are divine truth, instead of seeking to solve the question by the exer-

cise of reason, by a mere intellectual grappling with the difficulties which confront him, by seeking to solve them through processes merely of the logical understanding, instead of doing all this, let him begin by submitting his difficulties, at once, to the test of actual experiment: doing, as far as he knows, all God's word bids him do, believing it enough to make a good, honest trial of it: and then, also as the result of such personal test of it, as the witness of his own experience with it, he shall know that Jesus is the Christ, that the Bible is the Word of God, that Christianity is, indeed, the revelation to our lost world of the infinite love and grace of God. The great truth or fact, then, which our Savior here teaches us is, that, in respect to spiritual or divine things, we attain to our best knowledge and certainty of them by doing them, or, in other words, that obedience is the way to knowledge.

This truth the Scriptures everywhere declare. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and to them will He show His way." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." "The longing soul shall be satisfied." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." And that other utterance of Christ: "I am the Light of the World: He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but he shall have the light of life."

All these passages, and many more, are God's declaration of this law of His spiritual kingdom; of this fact, rather, that God is ever ready and eager to reaveal Himself to the seeking, humble and obedient

soul, to all whose eyes are turned heavenward, whose spiritual ears are divinely attuned, who listen and wait to hear what God, in His Word, and by His providence, says to them, and who then, instantly and fully and joyously, do what they believe to be the will of God, saying, with the child Samuel, at midnight, talking to God in the darkness: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth"; these, these, the Scriptures declare, are the ones to whom God will show His glory and make clear His truth.

Illustrations of this divine law or fact that divine knowledge and blessing always come to us in the way of obedience, also abound in the Bible. When the children of Israel, *e. g.*, obeying God's command, once came trustingly right up to the Red Sea, it opened before them. When the priest's feet actually once touched the waters of the Jordan, they parted. When Abraham, in resolute and believing obedience to God, had once actually bound Isaac to the altar, and had raised his hand, and was just in the act of striking the sacrificial blow, God appeared and provided another victim. When Naaman, in obedience to the bidding of God by Elisha, was once in the very act of washing seven times in the Jordan, he was healed of his leprosy. When the man with the withered hand once actually tried to do what Jesus told him to do, *i. e.*, made the effort to stretch out the withered hand, in the very effort to do it, he received divine strength also to do it. When the women, who desired to anoint the body of the Savior in the gray dawn of His resurrection morning, once came to His sepulchre, they found the great stone which had closed it rolled away. When Peter was liberated from prison, and he and the

angel once came up to the iron gate, leading out into the city, of its own accord it opened, swung open for them by the invisible divine power.

And so in many instances the Scriptures abound with them. It is one of the great lessons which God everywhere and in every way, all through His word, is trying to teach us.

The very nature of Christian life teaches us also the existence of this divine law, viz: that spiritual light and life and strength and blessing come only, and can come only, in larger measures, to those who faithfully use God's gifts in whatever measure He has already granted them. God will not waste His gifts on us. The Holy Spirit will not give more light to him who shuts his eyes to the light he already has. No! Only when we rightly use what we already have, does God give us more. Only when we go trustingly on do we also get farther on in the way of salvation. Only when we do the will of God, do we come to know better what is His will. Only when we exercise the spiritual strength we already have, do we increase in strength.

Christian life is very much, indeed, like one of those patent automatic or self-opening gates that we often see in the country, arranged so that when you drive on and once strike the iron upright with your carriage wheel, the gate opens before you. As long as you sit or stand still outside, the gate keeps shut, and all the thinking and reasoning and feeling and philosophising and even praying that you may do will not open it. But act; avail yourself of the provision made; drive right up to the gate; once actually strike the upright iron; and, at once, also, easily and widely the gate opens and welcomes you in. It

is just so in Christian life. "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath," says the Savior. "Then shall we know," says the Prophet Hosea, "if we follow on to know the Lord." "I have more understanding," says David, "than all my teachers, because I keep Thy commandments." "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teachings whether I speak of myself, or whether it be, as I claim, of God."

It is, I repeat, God's law of obedience in divine things, which is the way to knowledge. God meets us and blesses us only when we are once humbly and believingly walking in the way in which He has told us to walk. The way opens as we go on in it; the strength comes as we need it; the light increases as we follow on after God in the light we have.

Having thus considered the nature and reality of this principle or law which the Savior, in these words of our text, declares, let us now make a few practical applications of it.

1. How great, we may notice first, is the goodness of God to have thus made mere willing and honest obedience to His will, in so far as we know it, the condition and the means also, both of larger knowledge of His will and greater spiritual disposition and power to do His will.

If our assurance or certainty of Christian truth, of these teachings of God here in His word, of these doctrines and facts especially which center in Christ and which constitute what we designate "the Gospel," or "Christianity," if our assurance of all these, I say, depended upon our ability by logical processes

of reasoning to convince ourselves of their certainty; if we could be assured of the certainty of Bible truth only by the study of so-called "Evidences of Christianity," only by clear, convincing, logical demonstration, only in the way of proof from miracles and from prophecy, only through the avenue of the intellect and understanding: if this were the case, how very few of our human race could ever know the Gospel, how few could ever be saved.

But thanks be to God, this is not the way by which we come to know. According to our text, and according to the whole tenor of God's word, in order to understand the Scriptures, to be assured of the reality of the truths of Christianity, to come into clear and right apprehensions of God, of Christ, of the way of salvation, of all that concerns our souls and our eternal interests, we are not dependent upon our power to grapple with them as mere intellectual problems. Our salvation does not depend upon our ability to solve them by thought, reflection, reason. Rather does it all, Christ here tells us, depend upon the heart than upon the head; upon the will rather than the intellect; upon faith rather than upon knowledge; upon obedience rather than upon understanding; upon the soul's moral attitude toward God rather than upon its mere mental outreach and grasp of Him; upon a humble, teachable, receptive, childlike spirit rather than upon great talent or scholarship.

And, hence, also, in all our Churches, we have those whose education is meagre, whose mental ability is comparatively feeble, whose power to grasp argument and weigh evidences, and convince themselves of the truth of Christianity by processes

of reasoning, is weak and limited, but who, nevertheless, have a wondrous knowledge of divine things, have a marvelously clear and correct apprehension of the plan of salvation, have an astonishing keenness of spiritual insight into the deep and precious things of God's word, and who, solely through Christian experience, have attained to a knowledge and assurance of divine things which far exceeds the attainments of others who are intellectually far superior to them.

My mother was one of the best biblical exegetes I have ever known. She was no scholar; but she was pre-eminently holy, she was intensely spiritual-minded, she kept company with God every hour of her life. She was very intimate with Him. She lived in His word; accepted it without one single doubt about its being indeed the word of God; day and night she bent over it lovingly, eagerly listening to what God would say to her out of it; and thus listening and eager to hear and learn, she did, also, hear and learn blessed divine things. God, every day, out of His word, told her precious heavenly things, celestial secrets which He tells only to souls which, like hers, are holy, and are attuned to hear what He has to say.

And there are many such souls: souls that have come into possession of the deep and precious things of God, not through reason, or processes of thought, or intellectual mastery first of the truth, but through simple faith, by willing obedience of God's will as they knew it, by uncaviling love of the truth, by a quenchless thirst of their souls after God as revealed in Christ, and by ceaseless prayer for yet more of the light and life of God within them. Thus many have

attained it. Thus the most of us have attained it. Thus only can the most of us attain it. Thus only, indeed, in its true sense, or in its final experience, can any of us attain it. The knowledge of God as our Father and Savior through Christ comes to us all at last, not through reason, but through faith.

Let us thank God that it is so. Let us rejoice that it can be thus attained. For thus, by this simple way of faith and obedience, it becomes possible for all of us to know God, to be saved through Christ, to come into the full possession of the blessings of pardon and peace and salvation, both now and forever.

2. We learn, secondly, from this subject what course or method inquirers into the reality or truth of Christianity, and seekers after personal salvation, must pursue in order to attain what they seek.

Men often complain that there are things in the Bible which they can not understand, and they hesitate to believe them, or to begin a Christian life, because they can not understand them. They go, in other words, on the false assumption that in order to believe the great truths of God's word one must first understand them. The very opposite, or reverse, however, is the condition, as we have seen, of coming to a knowledge of Bible truth. By first believing and doing we come to understand and know. The reason, therefore, why men who thus complain that they can not understand God's word, do not understand it, is simply because they do not take God's way, which is the only successful way, of coming to understand it, viz: the way here laid down by the Savior to understand it. The reason why they do not understand better the word of God is,

simply, because, as far as they do understand it, they do not obey it. As far as they already know God's will, they do not willingly and faithfully do that will. On the contrary, they are disobedient to the convictions of duty which they already possess, doing the things which both God's word and their own conscience tell them they ought not to do. Pursuing such a course, how can they reasonably expect God to reveal more truth to them? Would they really be assured of the certainty of the great truths of God's word? Do they really want to know if all these tidings, here revealed in the Scriptures, are indeed, true? Then let them take God's way to know. Let them adopt the method here prescribed by the Savior. Let them try to know God's will by doing God's will. Let anyone *e. g.*, who is a doubter, an honest skeptic, concerning any truth of God's word, who does not know whether it is true or not, only let him begin to do what he finds in this word, as the will of God, which he does not understand. Let him follow the light as far as it shines, let him obey the Scriptures as fully as he knows them, and he will, also, then constantly receive more light, and obtain a clearer and still clearer understanding of Scripture, and, from a state of doubt and uncertainty concerning the truths of God's word, he will come to know them as absolute certainties. Let him not concern himself about things in God's word which he does not understand, but let him only act obediently upon all that he does understand. Then he will know. For, as Bishop Wilson says: "When Christianity is made a mere science, nothing is more intricate; but when it is made a loving duty, a joyous life of the soul, nothing is more easy."

Suppose, then, a man before me here this morning has certain honest doubts about the truth of Christianity: what ought he to do? Let him, at once, I answer, begin as Jesus here enjoins, to do the will of God. Let him begin, in all known duty, to live a Christian life. Let him, at once, give up every sin. Let him daily take up his Bible and read it, keeping his mind open to conviction, and, at once, as well as he knows how, and as far as he sees his duty, do all that it bids him. Let him humbly pray to God, asking God to enlighten his mind and to show him whether the Bible is, indeed, the Word of God. Let him pray especially to the Holy Spirit, asking that, if there is such a thing as a change of heart, he may experience that change; that if there is such a thing as faith in Christ, and pardon of sins, and friendship with God, and assurance of the truth, and certainty of final salvation, he may have them. Let him thus divest himself of all prejudice, be humble, and honest, and teachable, and earnest, begin to do God's will fully, as far as he knows it, feeling his dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and obeying His divine leadings just as fast as he sees them, let him do all this, and he shall know. The Holy Spirit, through the truth, and while he is in this pathway of obedience, will soon give him a clear assurance that all is true, and will also, through the truth, bear witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. In a word, let him, as a sinner, go by faith straight to the Cross. Let him take Christ as his Savior on trust. Let him, on the testimony of others, on the testimony of the Bible itself, believe that the Bible is God's Word and that Christianity is a divine religion. Let him not perplex himself about the mys-

teries or difficulties of Christianity. Let him not try to tunnel his way up to the Cross and salvation by the spade and pick of argument, but, on the light wing of faith, let him, at once, fly there, and then, in the light which there falls on him, from that high vantage ground of experience, he will see and know, without a doubt, that Jesus is the Christ.

An impressive confirmation of this truth that knowledge of divine things comes by believing their reality and acting upon the assumption that they really are, is related in the biography of Lady Henry Somerset, president of the British Women's Temperance Association. She had, in her earlier life, been greatly troubled with religious doubts, especially concerning the existence of a personal God. One day, restless and wretched, she had strolled into her garden or park, and had seated herself at the foot of a great elm tree, absorbed in meditation. Thus seated and engaged, all at once she heard a voice, not with her bodily ear, but in the inner depths of the soul, saying: "Act as if I were, and thou shalt know I am." She was startled. What did it mean? Whence came it? She repeated it, said it over and over in her mind: "Act as if I were, and thou shalt know I am." At once she did so act: believed that God is, assumed that He is, acted to the best of her ability toward Him as her God, trusted Him, worshipped Him, loved Him, served Him, lived for Him, and soon also came into the full assurance of His being, and into joyous and blessed spiriual acquaintance with Him.

There is another class of persons to whom our text addresses itself, viz: those who, while not troubled with doubts, yet have little or no religious feel-

ing, and are waiting for that before they will call themselves Christians, or even try to live a Christian life. But who has asked them thus to wait for feeling? God certainly has not. Obedience to known duty is what God requires. The doing of God's will is what the Bible enjoins. Feeling will come in obeying. Obey and you will feel, for obedience brings both knowledge and feeling.

3. This same law holds good also, I yet remark, in regard to us who are Christians.

Many professing Christians are greatly embarrassed and perplexed in determining the question of their own personal piety. What they would like to know to an absolute certainty is, that they are Christians. This they do not know, and hence they are constantly catechising themselves on this point. Now, it is quite true that the Bible directs us to examine ourselves, and thus ascertain whether we are in the faith. This, therefore, we ought to do. And yet it is a great mistake in Christian experience to carry this to the excess to which some carry it, and to make the knowing that we are Christians the first thing, instead of first seeking to be Christians. He who does this will never be able to satisfy himself that he is a Christian. He will in a certain sense look his own spiritual exercises out of countenance, and frighten them into retirement, so that he can not see them at all, or hope with any comfort. The main duty of the Christian is not to determine whether he is such, but to do the things which constitute and mark a Christian character. No man will be saved or lost on the basis of his judgment as to his own piety. Whatever one may think of himself, he will be saved if he believes in and loves Christ and de-

votes his life to Him; and if he does not do this he will not be saved. Our advice to those who are forever asking the question whether they are Christians, and never able to answer it, is to engage with all their hearts in the duties of the Christian life, to work for Christ, to labor and to pray for the salvation of souls—in short, to obey the commandments of God. Doing this, they will solve the problem of personal piety much more easily and safely than they ever can by making it the promient specialty of Christian thought. Their own piety will spontaneously affirm itself in their own consciousness. They will not need to hunt for it, or get up syllogisms to prove it, since their daily lives will be the living proof constantly before their eyes.

Increasing obedience is the source of ever-increasing knowledge. The more we obey, the more, also, shall we know. The holier we are, the wiser also shall we, in the things of God, be. If we will do His will, then will we know of the doctrine, and then will we come, more and more, into the secret of the Lord. By simply trusting Christ, and obeying Him as our Divine Lord, He will disclose Himself to us in all His saving glory, giving us such a precious Epiphany of Himself that, like the magi, we shall be assured that He is, indeed, the Christ.

VI.

SAVING AND UNSAVING SORROW FOR SIN.

Ash Wednesday.

COLLECT.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

VI.

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

II Corinthians, vii:10.

WITH Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent, so called from a custom introduced by Gregory the Great, of sprinkling ashes on the heads of penitents on that day. The term, "Lent," is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word, "lencten," which means, spring. It designates the fast of forty days (excluding Sundays), observed annually from Ash Wednesday to Easter by the Roman Catholic, the Anglican and the Lutheran Churches. In the Lutheran Church, however, its observance is less universal than in the others named.

"The existence of such a fast," says Dr. Schaff, "can be traced back, through Ireneus and Tertullian, to a very early period in the history of the Church. Originally it seems to have lasted only forty hours, referring to the time between crucifixion and the resurrection, during which Christ was under the power of death; but gradually those forty hours became forty days, referring to the forty days' fast of Moses, Elijah and our Lord. The fast consisted in some places and at some times in total abstinence from all kinds of food until evening on all days except Sundays; in other places and at other times, in

abstinence only from flesh and wine. But generally the fast was accompanied with the cessation of everything having a festal character, such as public games, theatrical shows, etc. Even the courts were closed. At the same time the services in the churches assumed a more somber character. The pictures were veiled, the organ grew silent, etc. Lent, when observed today, retains its ancient features."

It is a season which, as we all well know, has been greatly perverted from a true spiritual use, and, in consequence, it has often failed to secure the spiritual benefit at which it professedly aims. Often, indeed, by many its observance consists in a mere round of religious ritualism, a slavish performance of so many set religious acts, or cessation from accustomed irreligious acts, attaching moral merit to it all, but failing in it all to bring to God the one only acceptable offering: the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart.

But all this is an abuse and total misuse of the Lenten season. The real and right use of Lent consists in deep heart searching, in close examination of Christian living, in penitence and sorrow over sin, in self-abasement and humiliation because of neglected duties; in confession before God of guilt; in renewed consecration to God; in seeking after stronger faith in Christ and greater holiness of character and life; in a new girding on of spiritual strength for a better service for Christ: in all these high spiritual acts and experiences, a true Lent consists.

Surely a season thus spent can not but prove most profitable, a means of heavenly benediction both to

individual Christian and to the Church. In harmony with this true spiritual purpose of Lent, and to aid you to realize in your own Christian life its designed benefits, your attention, today, is asked to the text already announced, which sets before us, as our Lenten thought: The Difference between a True and a False Repentance. "For godly sorrow," is its language, "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of, but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

The Scriptures plainly declare that evangelical repentance is a condition of salvation. "Repent ye," was the text and burden of the preaching of John the Baptist, the harbinger of the coming Messiah. "Except ye repent," said Christ Himself, "ye shall all likewise perish." "Repent, and be baptized," was the language of Peter, upon the great day of Pentecost, "everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

But, like gold, or like the precious diamond, this genuine repentance which is thus enjoined has, also, its worthless and dangerous counterfeit. This is evident from our text. As you perceive, it speaks of two kinds of repentance: the one true, the other false; the one genuine, the other spurious; the one characterized as "godly sorrow," the other as the "sorrow of the world;" the one "repentance unto salvation not to be repented of," the other a repentance which "worketh death," and which, by implication, will ever be the subject of useless and bitter regret.

Since, therefore, there does thus exist a false as well as a true repentance, and since, as experience

attests, the one is readily mistaken for the other, and since a mistake on this point is vital, and involves the most fearful and eternal consequences, it is of the utmost practical importance that each one of us possess clear and correct views with regard to this entire subject, and that no one of us be deceived with regard to his experiences concerning this essential condition of salvation.

True and false repentance differ in three vital respects, viz: In their origin; in their nature, and in their results or consequences.

I. True and False Repentance Differ in Their Origin.

The mind, in true and false repentance, contemplates, as the originating cause of repentance, entirely different objects. They are in this respect, therefore, like two streams flowing from two unlike springs or sources: the springs differing, the streams also necessarily differ. True repentance flows from just and scriptural views of the heinousness and intrinsic guilt of sin itself, as committed against God, the holiest and best of beings; whereas, false repentance arises wholly from a selfish sense of danger, and from fear of the consequences of sin. In the one case, namely, in genuine repentance, sin itself, its enormity, its criminality, its deep guilt, its odiousness in the eyes of a pure and holy God, becomes the object of contemplation, and from the views thus attained flows the stream of godly sorrow and truly penitent tears. In the other case, it is different. There, not sin itself, but the conse-

quences of sin, the danger and fearful punishment of sin, become the objects of contemplation and originate the repentance.

The criminal condemned to death for the crime of murder, and the child who has violated some parental law, are illustrations of this difference. The one is sorry for his crime only, perhaps, because he is now about to suffer the penalty of the law for it; the other is sorry for his offense because by it he has wronged and grieved the loving parental heart, and has wronged also himself by it in disturbing the loving and trusting relation which before bound parent and child joyously together.

Cain, the first fraticide, and David, the penitent adulterer, are further illustrations: the one selfishly crying out: "My punishment is greater than I can bear"; the other, "My sin is ever before me." The one contemplates only the consequences to himself of his act, with no sorrowful penitence over it as, in itself, a great moral wrong, and with no felt sense of personal guilt because of it; the other thinks but little of the consequences to himself as a punishment for his great sin, but he sorrows over the sin itself: he contemplates, he loathes, he hates that, and from his deepest heart he cries out to God to pardon and cleanse him of that.

There is, then, you observe, a radical difference between true and false repentance in their very origin. They spring from totally different standpoints of contemplation of their sin, and from an entirely different apprehension of their moral relation to it.

II. True and False Repentance Are Essentially Different, Also, in Their Nature.

In the first place, true repentance involves, as already intimated, an utter hatred and abhorrence of sin and warring against sin. whereas, in false repentance there is no hatred, no such abhorrence, no such warring against sin, but, on the contrary, secret approbation and love of sin. Sin, every true penitent hates, with all his heart. With his heart, I say, for by hatred of sin something more is meant than that mere intellectual apprehension of its nature and evil, which still leaves it an object of love as much as it was before. The true penitent really hates sin. Others may speculate about it, may talk about the evil of it, may reason about it, but he feels it, he knows its odiousness, he hates it. The spirit of God has, through the word of God, opened his eyes to see it in its true light, and, thus seeing it, he now recognizes it as intensely evil, hates it, and turns from it. Its remains within him he laments with bitter tears, and gladly would he give all the world, were it his, could he but eradicate it wholly from his heart.

> "Had he a throne above the rest,
> Where angels and archangels dwell,
> One sin, unslain, within his breast,
> Would make the heaven as dark as hell."

Wholly different, now, from all this, are the feelings which accompany false or spurious repentance. Here there is no such loathing and hatred of sin. Here there is no such deep-seated abhorrence of its presence, no such delicate shrinking from its slightest approach, no such fear and dread of its power,

and no such regret at its remaining indwelling in the heart. In a word, in false repentance, sin itself is still as dear to the heart as it ever was. It is unrecognized as an intrinsic evil, it is unhated and unopposed, and, were it not for the terrific consequences which are threatened against it, all the repentance of the false penitent would at once vanish, and he would again, with increased relish, return to its unbridled indulgence.

Paul is a fine illustration of true repentance in this respect. To see how he regarded sin, not sins as acts, but his remaining sinfulness, the remaining sinfulness of his renewed nature, after he was once truly a Christian, read that wonderful Seventh Chapter of the Romans, in which, as it were, he opens his deepest heart to us, and gives us an insight into his very innermost religious experience. It is this remaining sinfulness in him that distresses him. This, he feels, is his enemy. He wars against it. He hates it. It is to him a loathesome body of putrefying death, and, in his heart sickness over it, he cries out: "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

On the other hand, the Israelites, in the time of Moses and Joshua and the Judges, are, in this respect, a good illustration of false repentance. When punished by God for their sins, they professed great repentance and promised great moral amendment. But, alas! almost immediately, when the stroke of God's correction was removed from them, they returned again to their sins, and forgot their promises. They had, in their hearts, no real hatred of their sins. On the contrary, they really loved them, and relished them, and, hence, returned to them. There

was, in a word, no renewed heart in them; their old sinful natures were unchanged; and, hence, they could not love holiness and hate sin. Only a regenerated man, like Paul, ever, in spiritual distress, can hate sin, and will ever, like him, cry out to God for deliverance from its galling yoke. Hence, the professed repentance of so many, aroused in seasons of great religious excitement, the repentance of so many professing conversion or repentance on sick beds and in the face of death, often afterward shows itself utterly spurious. It was begotten solely of fear. It had regard only to the impending consequences of their sinful characters and lives. It had in it no sense of the evil of sin in itself, in its relation to God, and of their personal guilt because of it.

A second point of difference in the opposite natures of true and false repentance is this: that, in true repentance there is always unhesitating and unreserved self-condemnation, while in false repentance there is always the spirit of self-excuse and self-justification.

As long as a person indulges a self-justifying spirit, and is disposed, if not to defend his sins, yet to excuse them, he is not truly penitent. To frame excuses for sin is the besetting infirmity of human nature. Adam threw the blame of his sin upon the woman, and she, in turn, threw it upon the serpent, and since, among their millions of descendants, there have ever been few who did not, in this respect, imitate their example. We often hear those who have recently been led to see their sins endeavor, in some way, to mitigate their guilt. One, for example, pleads the peculiarity of his situation, another, his natural consitution, a third, the strength

of his temptations, a fourth imputes it all to original sin, a fifth endeavors to lessen his guilt by telling God how he was led into sin by wicked companions. But, there can never be true repentance whilst this self-excusing and self-justifying frame of mind exists. Never, until the sinner takes all the guilt to himself, casting aside all excuses, rejecting all pleas of extenuation, abandoning all self-justification, never till he pronounces his own sentence of condemnation, and is brought, unfeignedly and contritely, to exclaim: "Guilty! guilty! God be merciful to me, a sinner," is he really and truly penitent, and never until then can he hope to hear the cheering words: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee."

The Prodigal Son, in the Parable, is a fine illustration of true repentance in this respect. In all his confession to his father there is not the first breath of self-exculpation. He casts all the blame of his wrong-doing upon himself, and upon himself only. Meeting his father, he penitently says: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Thus is it in all true repentance. True repentance ever emphasizes the personal pronoun, I. It ever says: "I have sinned." It bows itself in dust and ashes before God, and humbly acknowledges its guilt, praying: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

III. True and False Repentance Are Essentially Different, Finally, in Their Results and Consequences.

They differ, first, in this, namely, that true repentance leads its subject to trust in Jesus Christ for forgiveness and salvation; whereas, in false repent-

ance, the soul refuses thus to trust itself into the hands of Christ, and to believe the word of God, which declares that "the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin."

For the illustration of this truth, we have two cases right in point, namely the cases of Peter and Judas. Both had been the disciples of Christ; both, as far as we know, had equally enjoyed His favor; both, too, in return, had grievously injured Him: the one, with oaths and bitter curses thrice denying Him, the other, coolly and avariciously betraying Him; and both, also, perceiving the criminality and odiousness of their conduct, exercised the deepest repentance. Thus far now—where are they different? Nowhere. But now follows the difference. The one repents, goes out, weeps bitterly, confesses his sin, remembers the love and mercy of Christ, trusts, believes, is forgiven and saved. The other, also, in some sense, repents, confesses his sin, comes to the scribes and priests and casts down the money before them, refusing longer to keep it, exclaiming: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." But, then, instead of going, as he might have gone, as he should have gone, to the cross or the tomb of Christ; instead of recalling the compassion of Jesus, how willing He always is to forgive sin, and love sinners; instead of believing with all his heart in Christ as his Savior—oh, instead of all this, torn by the wildest remorse on account of his crime, he goes out into the silence and darkness of the night, and, hanging himself, sinks to even a still deeper hell than that which he then endured. Peter's repentance was true repentance. He believed in Christ; his sorrow drove him to the Savior, and he

was pardoned and saved. The repentance of Judas, on the contrary, was false; he did not thus, evangelically believe and, therefore, was lost.

So is it now in every case of true and false repentance. The one leads to faith, pardon, life; the other to unbelief, condemnation, death. No repentance is ever true and saving repentance unless it drives the penitent soul to Christ. In repentance, in conviction itself, there is no salvation. It is valuable only as it leads us to trust our guilty souls to Jesus for salvation. Remember this.

But again, true and false repentance differ in that true repentance leads to permanent and increasing reformation and holiness of life, whereas false repentance results in no such blessed fruits.

When John the Baptist, in the wilderness of Judea, heralded the approach of Messiah's kingdom, and multitudes of Pharisees and Sadducees flocked to his baptism, his stern language to them was: "Oh, generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance." That is, "If, indeed, you have repented, show it, by the legitimate results of repentance, by forsaking sin, by obeying the commands of God, and by increasing reformation of your lives." And so also Christ declared, "By their fruits ye shall know them": not by their professions or feelings or experiences, but by their fruits. And what does He mean by this? He means that every man's life is the index of his heart. He means by it that when a man has truly repented of sin, when in his heart he really hates it, and when, above all

things, he desires to love and serve God, he will also, by a consistent, peaceable and Christian life, evince it.

And this is, after all, the one only reliable proof of true repentance. We can not go down into the deep chambers of the human heart, either of another man's, or of our own, and there see whether its possessor has truly repented of sin, whether he hates it, whether he loves God, and is a Christian. But, I will tell you what we can do. We can go to his life, to his words, to his associations, to his enjoyments, to his daily walk and conversation, and there, with infallible accuracy, can determine his true character. If his repentance is true, his life will declare it, both to himself and to others. And if his repentance is false, his life also will reveal it. And if the repentance is genuine, the reformation will be permanent. There will be no backsliding. This, then, is another infallible evidence, namely, a permanently holy life.

Finally, true and false repentance differ in this, namely, that true repentance is repentance, as our text says, unto salvation.

It results in salvation. It is repentance not to be repented of: a repentance which itself needs no repentance; whereas, false repentance is a repentance which worketh death, and will cause eternal sorrow and repentance.

In illustration of this, look, for a moment, beyond the boundery of this life. Glance into the eternal life. Go up, for a moment, to the heavenly world. See the radiant multitude that there encircles the throne. How bright their crowns! How resplendent their raiment! How rapturous their enjoyment!

How full and loud their song! Who are they? Whence come they? Once they were sinners, here upon earth. Once they were rebels against God, enemies of Jesus Christ, lovers of iniquity. But, seeing their guilt, they repented, with "goodly sorrow" mourned over it, confessed it, renounced it, and now are saved. And do they now, think you, repent of their repentance? Are they now sorry for their former godly sorrow? Nay! Nay! Nay! For theirs was, as our text expresses it, "a repentance unto salvation, never to be repented of," and, in view of it, they now rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. It was a blessed repentance. It led them to Christ. It has resulted in their salvation. They do not repent of it.

But now, on the other hand, how different with those whose repentance was, merely, "the sorrow of the world."

Cast your eye down to perdition. There are millions there who once, when here upon earth, were convicted and penitent. Yet, now, they are eternally lost in that dreadful world of woe. Why? Because theirs, here, was not a true repentance. Theirs was not a godly sorrow; it did not lead them in faith to Christ. It was, alas, the sorrow of the world; and now theirs is, and ever, therefore, will it be, an unending repentance of that repentance which "worketh death."

Beloved! let us apply these Lenten thoughts personally to ourselves. Professing to have repented of sin, let us all ask ourselves, with earnestness and sincerity, whether ours is a true or false repentance; whether it is, indeed, "a godly sorrow," or only

possibly, "a sorrow of the world"; whether it is a "repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of," or, possibly "a repentance which worketh and leadeth to death." And may God, in mercy, forbid that any of us should be deceived with regard to this vital question. "Search us, O God, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting."

VII.

PARTNERSHIP IN OTHER MEN'S SINS.

First Sunday in Lent.

COLLECT.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

VII.

"Neither be partaker of other men's sins."
II Timothy, v:22.

IN the clause immediately preceding our text, Paul bids Timothy to "lay hands suddenly on no man." Two interpretations have been given to these words. The one regards them as referring to the ordination, by the laying-on of hands, of men to the Gospel ministry. If this interpretation be the true one, then the import of the command is: "Be not hasty in placing men in the ministerial office; but, first, make sure that they are called of God to it, that they are fitted for it, that they will be useful in it."

A second interpretation, however, given by others to the words is, that they have reference to the absolution, by the laying-on of the hands of the pastor, of penitents, and their readmission into Church fellowship. This latter interpretation is, probably, the right one. If so, the meaning is: "Be not overhasty to take back again into Church communion those who have once denied the faith; but, before again laying hands upon them, in token of their forgiveness and restoration, make sure that they are indeed penitent, and that they are worthy of such forgivenes and restoration."

But, whichever of these two interpretations we adopt, there is manifest, at once, a very close connection between this first clause of the passage:

"Lay hands sudenly on no man," and the words of our text, or the clause immediately following it, namely, "Neither be partaker of other men's sins." The meaning with either interpretation is: "Exercise with utmost thoughtfulness and judiciousness your official duties as pastor toward those who seek for place either in the ministry or in the membership of the Christian Church; for, if, through your carelessness or connivance at unworthy character and indifference as regards men's moral fitness for place in the Church of Christ, bad or unworthy men are brought into the Church, and, in that position, live unholy lives, and are guilty of sin, doing harm both to their own souls and the souls of others, tempted and led and encouraged to it by the very cloak of their Christian profession, they of course, are responsible to God for their sins, but you, also, are responsible: you are in partnership with them in their guilt: you are partaker of their sins."

Timothy, in other words, is here taught that he might easily load himself with the guilt of sins committed by other people, and he is earnestly exhorted to so live and act toward others that he would not thus be guilty of other men's sins.

The truth here taught is not, however, addressed only to Timothy. It applies not only to this one case here specifically named. It expresses, on the contrary, a great general moral fact, and is of universal application. It teaches that any man may make himself guilty before God for other men's sins. What Timothy could, in this respect, do, any man may do.

Hence to us all comes the exhortation, also of our text: "Beware lest you incur partnership in other men's wickedness. Take heed that you be not partaker of other men's sins."

If the question were asked: Of what sins committed by other men are we thus partakers, I would answer:

I. Sins of Our Fellow-Men Which We Were Able to Prevent and Yet Did Not Prevent.

The truth of this all will, no doubt, at once, admit. If a murder, or an act of arson, or a theft had, today, been committed in this community, and if I had had it in my power to prevent the commission of that crime, and if, through mere indifference or neglect, I had failed to do so, the moral sense, at least, of this community, if not the civil law, would hold me accessory to the act. Along with the man who had committed the crime I would be regarded as responsible for it, and I would be, as the law styles it, "particeps criminis": partaker of the crime.

And so with regard to any other offense of which a fellow-being is guilty, and which I had the power to prevent, but did not. For every such offense I am held by the public conscience morally responsible. My simple neglect or failure to prevent a crime, when it was in my power to prevent it, renders me a partaker of the crime.

And so with everyone. Public opinion, the universal conscience in society, as well as the word of God, holds everone as guilty not only for wrong doing which he himself commits, but also for the wrong doing which others commit, and which he, by fidelity to duty, might have prevented them from

doing. Illustrations of this are abundant. A parent, for example, who, through neglect of the proper training of a child, allows the child to grow up with such a character and such habits of life as make it, in later years, a curse to society, and lead it to the commission of repeated and shocking crimes, such a parent is universally held as, in large part, partaker of that child's crimes. A right discharge of parental duty would have prevented them. So a magistrate, who has legal power to restrain and prevent crime, and yet fails to do so; or a citizen, who, by his suffrage, might elect moral and righteous men to political office, and thus secure the passage and enforcement of good and wholesome civil laws, and who yet does not exercise his right of suffrage; or the professing Christian, who, by earnest personal efforts, might induce some fellow-man to forsake his course of sin, and turn to holiness and Christ, and yet neglects the privilege thus afforded him: all these, thus endowed with the power to prevent other men from the commission of sin, and neglected to do so, tested by these principles, are manifestly, in the sight of God, partakers of the sins which others, through their neglect, thus commit.

And thus with regard to all sins committed by others. The principle is a sound one. All that, in any way, we might have prevented and failed to prevent, we are measurably guilty of, and will be held responsible for.

II. Sins of Our Fellow-Men Which We Should Condemn, But Which We Fail to Condemn.

The soundness of this principle all must, also, I think, admit. Eli is an example in point. We find

that God regarded him as being partaker of the sins of his sons, because, as we read, "when they made themselves vile, he restrained them not": that is, he looked too leniently upon their conduct, and did not, as earnestly and strongly as he should have done, rebuke and condemn it. The Apostle Paul, also, is an example of this truth. He regarded himself, after his conversion, as being really one of the murderers of the Martyr Stephen: not because he had cast stones at him, or had directly and personally done a single thing to hasten his death, but because, as he tells us, when others were thus wickedly stoning him to death, he was present, holding the garments of those who were doing it, and consenting to it. That is, he saw it all without uttering a word of rebuke against it, without positively and vigorously entering his protest against it.

A mere connivance, therefore, at other men's sins, a mere silence while they are being committed, a mere failure to lift up our voices in earnest protest against them in strong expression of our detestation of them, most certainly renders us before God "partaker" of them; that is, to some degree, it renders us guilty of them.

And more: even if we know that a protest will avail nothing to abate or remove any special crime, even where the popular current of sin is so strong as to sweep down and drown out our protest, still, even then, as witnesses for the right, as silent educators of a better moral public sentiment, and especially as a faithful clearing of ourselves at the bar of our own conscience of these sins of our fellowmen, and in order to retain God's approval and blessing, our duty always is, in every possible judicious and

proper way to enter our emphatic protest against every species and every form of prevalent sin. We owe it to society, to ourselves, to the cause of truth and right in the world, to the cause of our holy religion, to Christ who died to atone for sin to save men from perishing because of sin, to all these we owe it ever to occupy an open and unequivocal position of antagonism with regard to everything that is either sinful and wrong in itself, or is calculated in any way to lead to moral wrong and to the moral ruin of men.

Of this high moral duty of thus clearing ourselves before God of responsibility for other men's sins by solemnly and openly and firmly entering our moral protest against them, and our unequivocal condemnation of them, and our declaration before God and man that we have no share in them, of this high duty there can, I say, be no possible doubt. This is the duty before God of each one of us. And until we do thus enter, in some way, our protest, we undoubtedly are, in some sense or measure, guilty of them. In some way we owe it to God and to ourselves to say: "These are not my sins; I condemn them; I disavow all moral responsibility for them." Even the heathen recognize this principle. For they have their expressive symbolism by which they thus repudiate responsibility for crimes committed by others. Pilate, for example, to indicate that he did not wish to be held responsible for the death of Christ, "took water," we read, "and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.'" And among the Jews, if murder had been committed, and the murderer was unknown, the divine law re-

quired that the elders of the city in which or nearest to which it was committed should slay a heifer, and wash their hands over it, and publicly disavow all knowledge of the crime, saying, in the name of their city: "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it." And only when once they had thus publicly and solemnly disavowed guilt, and expressed their moral abhorrence of the crime, were they, in God's sight, exonerated from it. It is manifest, then, I repeat, that a neglect to protest against any form of sin involves us, in the divine judgment, in the guilt of that sin.

III. Sins of Our Fellow-Men Which we in Any Way Incite, Encourage or Tempt Them to Commit.

This also is a position which no one can deny. He, for example, who plans a robbery, or suggests and urges on a fellow-man to commit murder, is, by common consent, regarded as equally guilty with him who executes the deed.

"*Qui facit per alium, facit per se*," that is, "He who does a thing through another does it himself," is an old Latin maxim based both on sound morals and sound jurisprudence.

The man, therefore, who, by his example, his language, his writings, his teachings, his influence, his business or pursuit in life, leads others to sin, makes himself thereby also guilty of their sin. Through him they were influenced to sin; why, then, should he not be held as in part also responsible for their sin? He is responsible. The skeptic, who inspires doubt or denial in others concerning the great truths of God's word; the libertine, who tempts others to a life of impurity; the profane man, who influences

others to use in blasphemy the sacred name of God; the desecrator of the Lord's Day, who influences others by his example to do the same; the evil companion, who induces an associate to indulge in wicked habits; the author, who by his writings teaches false principles in morals or religion; the vender of strong drink, whose daily business it is, for the sake of gain, to place before his fellow-men that which he knows may incite and drive them to the commission of almost every crime that man can commit: all these, thus tempting, inducing, influencing others, in all these various ways, to sin, are guilty with those whom they thus influence of the sins which they commit. Even human codes of jurisprudence so regard them; and especially thus are they deemed responsible under the ethics of the divine code.

To the extent of our influence over our fellow-men we are responsible for the moral character and conduct of our fellow-men. If they do well, as the result of our influence over them, we share, both from God and man, in the honor and moral glory of their well doing; and if, on the other hand, through our influence, they do wrong, we also share with them the shame and guilt of their wrong doing. Of this moral communism, this moral alliance and responsibility of man for his fellow-men, this moral partnership of souls, either for good or ill, of all this men can not rid themselves. They may, with Cain, say: "Am I my brother's keeper?" They may ask: "Are not others free to do as they choose? Did I compel them to do as I do? Were they necessitated to follow my example, or to comply with my incitements?" All this may they heartlessly say, and thus

may they seek to rid themselves of this burden of responsibility which even their own conscience tells them is on them, but the responsibility still remains. God continues to hold them accountable not only for the sins, but also even for the very souls of these their fellow-men thus led into sin by them. And if, at last, as the final result of the bad influences thus exerted upon them, these tempted souls go down to eternal death, then to them who did thus tempt them, and who were thus the occasion of their final destruction, God will say, as He said to Cain: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

And there is here also this additional thought which must never be forgotten, namely, that,

IV. This Partnership in Other Men's Sins Does Not Terminate With a Man's Natural Life.

By no means, I say, is this the limit of his guilt, or the full extent of his responsibility. On the contrary, influence is immortal. It lives when the man who originated it has long been dead. It is deathless, living on throughout all eternity.

The man, therefore, who lives a life of sin, and who thereby influences others to sin, starts a train of evil influences which, like some mighty river, will widen and deepen during all coming ages, and which, as long as time endures, will continue to lead men down to sin and eternal death. And thus does a bad man, or one even who is only not positively good, become partner of the sins of multitudes as yet unborn, of thousands or millions perhaps, who in the after centuries, when he has long lain crumbling in his grave, and is utterly forgotten, shall people

the earth. Even then, through the influence he has left behind him, does he still, in God's account, have a partnership in oaths, for example, that then shall be uttered, in infidelity that then shall be harbored, in impurity that then shall be practiced, in intemperance that then shall be indulged, in sins of a hundred kinds by which men shall then be hurried down to hell. His influence will live on perpetually. The law of heredity will go on in its tireless force asserting itself forever.

Thus, in various ways, as we have now seen, both during our lifetime, and afterward, may we, as our text teaches, "be partakers of other men's sins."

Standing at the judgment bar of this great fact which we have thus been considering, and testing ourselves by these admitted moral principles concerning our responsibility for the character and actions and final destiny of our fellow-men, how conscious we all instantly become of guilt, not only for our own sins, but, largely, also, of other men's sins. "Neither be partaker of other men's sins." But we have been partakers of them. We are now largely partakers of them. Think. Are there not many sins of our fellow-men which you and I might prevent? Are there not many sins committed, daily and openly, right here in our own community, by which multitudes of souls are being morally damaged both for time and eternity, concerning which we are shamefully and wickedly silent, and have never entered one single earnest, manly, ringing word of protest? Here, right here before our eyes, on almost every square of our city, are the liquor saloon and the gambling den. Here are the Sunday excursions, and Sunday base-ball games, and occa-

sional Sunday evening theatricals, and frequent brutal prize fights. Here are foul brothels, and the many sins which lead down to them. Here are our bulletin boards, placarded with most indecent pictures. Here are occasional infidel lectures, deriding our Bible and our Christianity, sapping the very foundations of pure morality, and undermining the whole temple of religion. Here, I say, right here before our eyes, continuing and increasing among us, are all these. And why, so far as we are concerned, should they not be here? What have any of us ever done to prevent their being here? What are we now doing to protest against their existence among us, to show our abhorrence of them, to root and drive them out of our midst? Nothing. We are silent as death about them. We are doing nothing against them. We allow them, unrebuked and unopposed, to go on doing their hellish work. We sit with closed lip, and folded hand, while this whole host of Satan are busy day and night entrapping, seducing, ruining souls. Verily, we are guilty before God in this matter. Our inaction, our indifference, our silence, our neglect to prevent these sins, our failure to rebuke, and oppose, and seek to exterminate them, all constitute guilt, and make us, before God, partakers of these sins of the wicked thus committed among us. Let us awake to our responsibility in this respect. Let us, as Christian people, band together and stand together for the overthrow of this increasing wickedness among us, and thus clear ourselves of the guilt which, otherwise, we incur.

Possibly, also, we have ourselves led others to sin, and by doing so have made ourselves partakers of their sins. By our neglect of a religious life we may,

possibly, have influenced others to neglect such life; by our doubts concerning Christianity we may, possibly, have led others to doubt; by our example of sin we may have influenced others to sin; if so, then we are partakers of their sins. Then there is a partnership in the sins which they commit, between them and us. We led them to turn in that direction. Because of the moral impulse we gave them, they are where they morally now are, and live as they are now living.

Thus, in many ways, are we all partakers of other men's sins. What shall we do about it?

Our first duty, undoubtedly, is to repent of our guilt for these sins of other men of which we are thus guilty.

This is our duty daily concerning sins which we ourselves directly and personally commit. This also is, therefore, our duty concerning these sins committed by other men in which we, in any way, have a share of responsibility. It is said of St. Augustine that one of his daily prayers was: "Lord, forgive me other men's sins." So should we daily pray. We should seek to know in how far we are thus guilty of sins committed by others, how far we are partakers of them; we should in our hearts sorrow over this guilt; and we should penitently confess our guilt and pray for divine forgiveness.

And, apart from our own personal responsibility or guilt for the sins of others, in compassion for others because of the ruin in which they are involving themselves both for time and eternity by their sins, and because of the moral wrong done to God, we should confess and mourn over the sins committed by others. Thus Jesus wept over the sins of

Jerusalem. Thus David cried: "Rivers of water run down mine eyes because men keep not Thy law." Thus Jeremiah said: "If ye will not hear the word of the Lord my soul shall weep for you in secret places and mine eyes shall run down with tears." And how tenderly Paul expresses himself concerning this sinfulness of others. "Many walk," he exclaims, "of whom I tell you weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

Thus, out of compassion for sinners, out of pity for their souls, out of desire for their conviction of sin and change to a new heart and better life and earnest yearning for their salvation, we ought, as Christians, to make confession of their sins for them before God. They are not sorry for their sins: let us be. They make no confession to God of them: let us confess them to Him for them. They do not pray: let us pray for them, asking God to show mercy toward them, convict, convert, save them.

But to be guiltless with regard to the sins of other men we must do more than thus confess them and repent of them. We must also do all in our power to keep others from sinning. In every possible way in which we can prevent them from sinning we must prevent them; in every possible way in which we can rebuke the sins they commit, and protest against them, and use endeavors to secure their discontinuance, we must thus rebuke them, protest against them, and labor to abolish them. All this is our duty with regard especially to the great prevalent social sins of our land and age, sins that have fastened themselves like cancers upon the moral life of our nation and are fast destroying it; we must, by voice and pen and example and influence and suffrage, by

moral suasion and by law, by every agency in our power, set ourselves, like giants, against them and root them out. By God's help we can do it. This nation need not be given over to the devil—and it dare not be.

Standing together, and girded with the might which God has promised us, intemperance, Lord's-Day desecration, infidelity, profanity, lewdness, and all gross forms of sin, can all be restrained, diminished and ultimately also, under the increasing reign of the gospel and greater sway of the kingdom of Christ, be utterly wiped out from the face of the earth. This universal reign of righteousness God has promised. For it, therefore, let us hope and labor and pray and wait.

But, above all, if we would avoid being guilty of other men's sins, we must give most careful heed that we do not, in any way, tempt or encourage others to sin. Our example, our speech, our conduct, our influence, our morals, our religious faith must all be of such a character as to be a savor of moral health and life to all who come in contact with us. Our influence must be a spiritual benediction to all who come within its reach. Our silent example must witness to all for righteousness. Our speech must be seasoned with the salt of divine grace, purifying souls all around us into a higher and holier life. Our character must be so pure, and unselfish, and good, and Christ-like, as, by its own quiet attractiveness, constantly to make bad men around us loathe their badness, and lead them to long after and seek after a purer and better character and life. We must, in a word, be godly and live

godly ourselves, if we would avoid leading others to be ungodly. Only thus can we avoid influencing others to sin, and only thus can we, therefore, escape being partaker of other men's sins.

Thus, by His grace, may God help us all to do. Then, with Paul, will be able, in the Great Day of Accounts, to look all the assembled millions of earth in the face and boldly say: "I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men."

VIII.

THE ROYAL ENTRANCE.

Palm Sunday.

COLLECT.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast sent Thy Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility: mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

VIII.

"On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord."

JOHN, xii:12, 13.

THERE is no picture in the history of our Savior's life here upon earth upon which, as Christians, we look with more gratification than upon the picture presented to us by the evangelists of His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem.

In reading the record of His life, we see Him often in circumstances of poverty and deep humiliation, unappreciated, unhonored, unrecognized as He deserves to be, often, indeed, as the prophet predicted, "despised and rejected of men."

But here, at last, we behold Him receiving something of the honor which we feel to be due to Him as the great Messiah. Here, at last, He seems to occupy in public estimation His true position, and to be recognized and welcomed in His true character. As a king, the King of Israel, as the king that cometh in the name of the Lord, amid the acclamations and homage and glad shouts of the multitude, He here rides, in royal state, into the city of David, the capital of the nation.

Let us recall the glad occasion, and, in the honor which then was paid to Jesus as king, let us learn how He should now be honored as divine Savior and King by us and by all men.

It seems probable that Jesus arrived at Bethany on the Friday before the Passover. The next day, the Jewish Sabbath, our Saturday, He spent in quiet at the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. In the evening, when the Sabbath was ended, the supper at the house of Simon the leper took place, when Mary expressed her loving devotion by anointing her Lord, breaking the alabaster box and pouring the precious ointment on His head and His feet.

On the next day, or the first day of the week, Jesus, with His disciples, started from Bethany to Jerusalem. A great multitude, composed of pilgrims from all parts of the land, also going up to the Passover festival, accompany Him. Having advanced as far as to a little village called Bethphage, He sent, we read, two of His disciples, saying: "Go ye into the village over against you, in the which, at your entering ye shall find a colt tied whereon never man sat: loose him and bring him hither." This command the disciples promptly obey. The multitude meanwhile, hearing and seeing Jesus, are wrought, in some strange way, into highest religious enthusiasm and excitement. They come, in some way, into the clear and positive conviction that this Jesus is their long-expected Messianic King. At once, also, they give the most enthusiastic demonstration of their convictions. The disciples, having returned with the colt, some of the great multitude throw their garments upon it, seat Jesus on it, and cause him to ride in state and triumph before

them. Others cast their garments in the road or way before Him, expressive of their loyal subjection to Him. Others cut down branches of trees and cast them as tokens of honor before Him. Others break off palm leaves and palm branches, and wave them as expressions of their joy and victory before Him. "And they that went before and they that followed, cried, saying: Hosanna! Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed be the kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest."

Thus, in triumph, amid the loud acclamations of the joyous multitude, hailed as their Lord and King, did Jesus, on that first Palm Sunday, ride there into Jerusalem. It was a deserved honor which was then thus accorded the Savior. Thus should He then have been honored. Thus should He now, as Lord and King, by us and by all men be honored.

Taking up the narrative, as given us by the evangelists, of this triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on that first day of Passion Week, let us study it, and let us learn from it for our benefit some of the many profitable lessons which it teaches.

Let us note carefully:

I. The Character of the Multitude Who Then, On That First Palm Sunday, Thus Honored and Welcomed Jesus as King.

John, here in our text, tells us very particularly that they were people who had "come to the feast"; that is, they were not chiefly inhabitants of Jerusalem, but they were persons mostly from the country around Jerusalem, from Galilee especially, from the towns and villages of the land, who had piously

come up, in devout obedience to the commands of God's law, to celebrate at Jerusalem the annual Passover feast. Mathew Henry suggests: "Perhaps they had been Christ's hearers in the country, and had been great admirers of Him there, and were forward now to honor Him here, also, at Jerusalem, where they knew He had many enemies; for those that have a true love for Christ will neither be ashamed nor afraid to honor Him anywhere, away from home as well as at home."

The point especially to be noted is, that it was not the scribes and Pharisees, it was not the rulers and the great men of the nation, it was not even the people of the city of Jerusalem, who, on this occasion, thus honored Jesus; but he was honored thus by the plain, the unprejudiced, the devout, so-called "common people" from the country.

But, as a rule, this is still the class who most readily receive Christ. It often occurs that those who have enjoyed the largest religious privileges, who constitute, as it were, the favored class in the way of religious knowledge, advantage and opportunity, who dwell, as it were, right in Jerusalem, and within sight and hearing of the temple, and who, even from their very childhood, have enjoyed instruction in Christian truth: it often, I say, occurs that this is the very class who still are not Christians, who withhold from Christ the love and homage and service which, as their divine Lord, are His due; while others, with fewer privileges and inferior advantages, and with much less knowledge, gladly receive Him. Why is this? One reason lies in the fact that familiarity with religious truth or knowledge, unless promptly accepted and obeyed, soon

loses its freshness and moral grip and power upon us. Accepted and obeyed, divine truth becomes ever more fresh and beautiful and attractive and mighty in its hold and power on us, and the larger our knowledge of it, and the greater our familiarity with it, the greater also becomes our love of it. But, when it is not thus accepted and obeyed, the direct opposite is the moral effect upon us. Our power to perceive it diminishes. Our susceptibility to be impressed by it decreases. Our love for it dies out. And ultimately, because Christ and His truth unaccepted condemn us, we turn also positively and bitterly against them. We pass from a mere negative indifference to them and a mere unacceptance of them into a moral state of postitive prejudice, opposition and hatred to them. And thus the truth, as it is in Christ, is ever to all who hear and know it either a savor of life unto life or of death unto death.

This was the case with these scribes and Pharisees, these chief priests and rulers, and even with the multitude of the people there at Jerusalem. Jesus had so often spoken to them, had so clearly and fully presented to them the truth of His Messiahship, and they had so long and so wilfully rejected it, that the truth had lost its moral attractiveness and power to them, and they had come even to hate both Christ and the truth which He preached. They were embittered again both.

It is still so. There is such a thing as being "Gospel-hardened," and even "Gospel-embittered"; so that while those whose advantages have been much fewer are accepting Christ, those highly-favored ones, often, like these people of Jerusalem, reject Him.

And, yet, the measure or degree of our religious knowledge and of our religious privileges and advantages will be the measure of our responsibility in the Day of Judgment. And hence, also, many, in that day, as the Savior teaches us, with but little opportunity here to know Him, and who here enjoyed but few religious privileges, will rise up and condemn those who here enjoyed much religious knowledge and many religious privileges, but who failed rightly to use them.

Let not this, finally, beloved, be our experience. Our privileges are, surely, very great. Our knowledge of Jesus is all we could desire. We live, as it were, right in Jerusalem, in the very temple of religious knowledge and privilege, in possession of God's word and ordinances. We have Jesus, as it were, teaching and working miracles right in our streets and before our eyes. Let us not, then, deny His claims. Let us not reject Him as the King of Israel. Let us not refuse to join with the multitude in giving Him the royal welcome which is His due.

But, let us now notice:

II. The Official Relation of Jesus, Which This Multitude Here Distinctly Recognizes, and in Which They Specifically Here Welcome and Honor Him.

It must be noted that it was distinctively in His regal office or relation that Jesus, on that first Palm Sunday, there in Jerusalem, by that applauding multutude, was welcomed and honored. They hailed Him as their Divine Lord and King. They cried:

"Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel." "Hosanna, to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

And that is what Jesus is. He is the Divine Lord or King. He is not Prophet only. He is that; but He is more. He is not Priest only: He is that, and it is a precious truth that He is our Atoning Priest. But He is even still more than Prophet and Priest. He is, also, Divine Lord and King. He is our Prophet, to teach us the will of God, and to show us the way of life. He is our Priest, to die for us, and to plead for us the merits of His blood, and thus make eternal life possible to us. But He is, also, our King, to sit enthroned in our hearts, to be supreme in His rulership over our love, to receive our homage and service with unswerving loyalty, both in time and eternity.

"Christ is our Prophet, Priest and King:
Our Prophet, full of light;
Our Great High Priest before the throne;
Our King of heavenly might."

Even before He was born, the Angel Gabriel declared to the Virgin Mary: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Almost as soon, also, as He was born, there came "wise men" from the East, saying: "Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" And He Himself, during His whole ministry, spoke often of the kingdom of God, and of Himself as a king.

Rightly, therefore, did the multitude, on His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, cry, as they did: "Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." For a King, indeed, He is. As He told Pilate, He is a King of a kingdom utterly unlike the kingdoms of this world, a true King of a true kingdom, a Ruler of true subjects. As such He lived; as such He rode in triumph into Jerusalem; as such He was crucified; and, as such, He will come again, and reign over the whole earth, "King of kings and Lord of lords."

In this, His kingly character, the multitude, then, on that first Palm Sunday, distinctly recognized and honored Him.

Thus, especially, does the Christian Church, now, on Palm Sunday, recognize and honor Him. The especial design of these Palm-Sunday services is, to emphasize this oft-forgotten truth of the kinghood of Jesus Christ. On Palm Sunday we set before our minds and hearts, with fresh vividness, the all-important truth, that Jesus Christ has not only come to teach us, and came not only to die for us, but came, also, to rule over us; that He is our Divine Lord and Master; that we are under His moral government; that we owe Him our love, our homage, our service, our best obedience, both now and forever.

Thus, then, should we, today, recognize and honor Him, here in the sanctuary. Thus should we always recognize and receive Him as our Lord and King. We should see to it that His kingdom is, indeed, established in our hearts. We should ever obey Him as our King. We should constantly pay Him that tribute of faith, and reverence, and love, which is His due as our spiritual King, and which He

prizes far above all other offerings which we could make Him. And we should, everywhere, confess Him, also, as our King, and never be afraid or ashamed to own ourselves as His loyal servants and subjects. For this is His rightful due. This we owe Him. And this, also, will be our highest wisdom, and to our best interest. For a day will come when this same Jesus, this same once-despised "Nazarene," this same one who was once "the man of sorrows," who once hung upon the cross, shall take to Himself His great power, and shall reign; when He shall put every enemy under his feet; when, as Daniel has foretold, "the kingdoms of this world shall all become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ"; and when those who have bowed to His scepter, and accepted Him as their King, and confessed Him before men, shall all shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of His glory.

Let us, however, yet notice:

III. The Varied Methods By Which This Enthusiastic Multitude, On That First Palm Sunday, Gave Expression to Their Recognition of Jesus as Their Divine King.

"They heard," we read, "that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem."

The announcement was welcome news to them. They rejoiced to hear it, and they, at once, also, we read, went forth to meet and welcome Him. Those at Bethany went forth into the street to meet Him. Those within the city, hearing the procession from Bethany approaching, rose up, and went out beyond the city gate, and, joining it, they escorted Him, with shouts of welcome, into the city. In a word,

the whole vast multitude welcomed and encouraged this kingly entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. They threw open, as it were, the gates to Him, and bade Him enter in. They escorted Him from Bethany in: they went out from Jerusalem to meet Him and welcome Him.

Thus must the soul, toward which Jesus, now, by His word or spirit, comes, also rise up and go forward toward Him, and meet Him, and bid Him welcome. Jesus forces entrance nowhere. He comes in as Savior and King only where the gate of the heart is thrown open to Him, and where He is invited in. The soul, in prayer, in longings after Him, and in desire for His entrance, must, therefore, if it would have Him actually enter in, go out and meet Him, and must ask Him to enter in and to be its King. Then, and then only, will He, also, come in and abide with it as Savior and Lord.

We read, however, that the multitude not only thus went forth to meet Him, but, as an expression of their full surrender of themselves to Him as their King, and as a token of the consecration of their all to His service, also took off their outer garments and laid them on the colt on which He rode, and even spread them in the way for Him to ride over.

Many of these garments, no doubt, were costly. Some of them, no doubt, were objects of pride. All of them, probably, were the best the owners had. But, no matter. Jesus is King; their best, they feel, is not too good to be laid in the very dust under His feet. And so, "they spread," we read, "their garments in the way."

This, as we all know, was an Oriental or Eastern way, in vogue even today yet, of expressing allegi-

ance or loyalty on the part of the people to their king; the whole road which leads to the capital of an Eastern monarch being, sometimes, for several miles, covered with rich silks, over which he rides into the city. And so, Jesus, here, now, enters into Jerusalem. The people, in recognition of Him as their Messianic King, and as an expression of their loving and loyal subjection to Him, as their Divine Lord, divest themselves of their garments, and cast them there beneath His feet.

Thus, in spirit, at least, must men still do, who would truly receive Jesus as King. There are some things of which they must divest themselves. They must divest themselves, for example, of all their garments of self-righteousness, laying them in the very dust before Him. They must divest themselves of their self-love or selfishness. They must divest themselves of their most valued possessions, their best gifts. They must, in a word, lay their very best, indeed, of everything at His feet. They must be willing to part with their all in order, in any way, to honor Christ, and advance His triumphal progress through the world. All must be joyfully renounced, and used, only so that thus this Great King, Jesus, may march gloriously onward in His moral conquest of the world. As our Divine King, He deserves all this. As subjects of His kingdom, we should thus show our allegiance to Him, and our honor for Him. And this, also, He demands. In order to become true subjects of His kingdom, He bids us thus to lay all at His feet, and give up our all to His service. Only thus can we be true subjects of His Kingdom.

As an additional expression of their recognition of Him as their Messianic King, and of their honor to Him as such, Matthew and Mark mention also that the multitude "cut down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way." And John says, here in our text, that "they took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Him."

It was proper and right so to do. It expressed their honor for Him as their Lord. For this, too, is an Eastern custom of showing honor to kings. Herodotus says that when Xerxes crossed the Hellespont the people went before him, strewing the way with myrtle branches. It was a custom, also, expressive of joy. "Ye shall take you," said God to Moses, "on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days."

The waving, therefore, of these palm branches was a token of their joy that Christ, the King, had, at last, come.

And surely that is a subject for joy. That Messiah, a Divine Savior, has come is enough to make us all glad. We, as well, then, as they, have reason today to wave the palm branch of rejoicing over the fact that Christ, the King, has come. So let us do.

"Joy to the world! The Lord has come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing."

But the palm branch was especially emblematic of victory. The glorified saints in heaven are represented, in the book of Revelation, as "having

palms in their hands." The use, therefore, of them on this occasion by the multitude was expressive of the fact that, though Christ, the King of Israel, coming in the name of the Lord, they, His subjects, should at last have the victory over all their foes. And in this is, also, our assurance of final victory. Christ being our King, certain, also, is our final victory: our final victory over sin, over all our spiritual foes, over all the ills of life, over death, over Satan, over hell. Ours, indeed, is already now, in life, the victory. Ours will be the victory in death. Ours will be the victory at last in heaven forever.

Join the multitude, then, my hearers, as they there escort the advancing Savior in through the gates of Jerusalem. With them wave the palm branches before Him. He is victor over all his foes, and, through Him, we are also victors over ours. "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

One and all let us, today, upon this joyous Palm Sunday of the church year, imitate the example, here set before us, of the disciples and friends of Christ there in Jerusalem upon that first Palm Sunday. To us now, as then to them, is declared the good news: "Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold thy King cometh." Thy King! Cometh! Yes, has come! "Behold" the precious, wondrous truth, says the prophet. Behold it, that is, recognize it, make note of it, wonder over it, rejoice in it, accept it, receive this King Jesus at thy King. Go out to meet Him. Take branches of joy and victory, and welcome Him. Spread thy garments of faith and love in the way before Him. Take Him as thy King. Give room for Him in thy heart. Lay thine all at

His feet. Let Him erect His throne within thy soul, and sway His scepter over thee, and be thy Lord and King. And rejoice that thou canst be His, and that He is willing to make thy poor heart His temple, saying: "Hosanna! I rejoice! Blessed is He that thus deigns, though King of Heaven, to come to me!"

And pray that, thus, also, He may come into every heart, and that His kingdom may soon be extended over all the world, and the blessings of His reign fill all our earth.

Thus may the kingdom of Christ soon, everywhere, come. And as, on that "Palm Sunday" of "Passion Week," He entered in triumph, as "the Savior-King," into Jerusalem, so may He, today, enter not only into our hearts, but so may He, also, soon enter into all hearts, to subdue all evil in them, to regenerate and sanctify them, to rule in them and to reign over them, and, finally, to save them.

IX.

THE WEEPING CHRIST.

Palm Sunday.

COLLECT.

O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength: keep us both outwardly and inwardly; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

IX.

"And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

LUKE, xix:41, 42.

ON three occasions, during His life here upon earth, it is recorded of our Savior that He wept. Once, as He stood at the grave of His friend Lazarus, moved with sympathy for the weeping sisters Mary and Martha, and impressed with the sad ruin wrought in human homes and hearts by the presence in our world of sin and death, it is recorded of Him: "Jesus wept."

Here, also, in this triumphal entry of His into Jerusalem, we again read of tears filling his eyes: "and when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it." And, as the Greek word here translated "wept" clearly signifies, He, here, was so much mastered by uncontrollable emotion that He wept aloud. As another has said: "At the grave of Lazarus He had dropped silent tears, but here He wept aloud. All the shame of His mockery, all the anguish of His torture, was powerless to extort from Him a single groan, or to wet His eyelids with one trickling tear, but here all the pity that was in Him overmastered His human spirit, and He not only wept, but broke into a passion of lamentation in which His choked voice seemed to struggle for utterance."

Then there is another reference in Scripture to our Savior's weeping. It is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews (v:7), where it is written of Him that "in the days of His flesh He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." This refers, probably, to His agonizing praying and wrestling with God in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, as we know, were not only His eyes filled with tears, but His whole sacred body was there bathed even in tears of blood, wrung from Him under the mighty pressure of spiritual distress, which, then, in that mysterious hour, as our vicarious substitute, He endured.

But these tears of Jesus over Jerusalem, let these alone, today, engage our thoughts.

Recalling all the occasion and circumstances of the hour, tears, there and then, by the Savior, were wonderfully surprising. One would not then have expected Jesus to weep. Recall distinctly the place and time. It was on the Sunday dear to Christian hearts now as "Palm Sunday," during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Coming from the little village of Bethany, where, at the home, probably, of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, He had spent the previous night, He was now, as we may suppose, at that point of the road where it sweeps in graceful curve around the southwestern slope of the Mount of Olives, and where, as travelers tell us, the whole city of Jerusalem suddenly bursts upon the sight. He is riding, in the assertion of His kingly dignity, as the Prophet Zechariah, five hundred and fifty years before had predicted, upon a "colt, the foal of an ass," the

animal upon which Oriental kings were accustomed to ride. Surrounding Him is a vast multitude of people, aroused to the highest pitch of patriotic and religious enthusiasm, hailing Him as the Messiah and Deliverer of their nation, spreading their garments in the way before Him, cutting down palm branches and waving them as symbols of victory to Him, and filling the air with loud shouts of acclamation in His honor, as the long-promised One, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!"

Such was the time and place: the hour of supremest earthly honor and popularity in all the Divine Redeemer's earthly life: the moment when least we would deem it possible that tears should dim His vision.

But, see. As this sight of Jerusalem thus suddenly bursts upon His sight, Jerusalem, the capital of His nation, the city of His father David, the spot so sacred to every Jewish heart, so enshrined by thousands of hallowed memories and associations in His soul, Jerusalem, with its triple walls, and its palace of the great kings, and its surpassingly glorious temple, and its great, busy, thronging multitude of people—as all this suddenly bursts upon His sight, He, at once, pauses. The sight absorbs Him. A strange, solemn thoughtfulness settles down upon Him. He seems no longer to hear or see aught of what is going on around Him. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, resting there so quietly and beautifully in all her glory at His feet, has all His interest. Look at Him. How stirred in His innermost being He seems to be! What deep emotion convulses Him! He, at

length, audibly sobs and weeps. And then He, also, speaks: speaks, as in half-unconscious soliloquy, speaks, at last, in apostrophe to Jerusalem herself. "And when He was come near," says our text, "He beheld the city," gazed steadily and continuously down upon it, "and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

In considering these tears of Jesus over Jerusalem, let us notice:

I. Their cause; and

II. Their lessons.

I. The source or cause of those tears of Jesus over Jerusalem was His deep compassion in view of her dreadful impending calamities. He, in that moment, saw hanging over her a doom of which she, alas! was all unconscious. By the glance of His omniscient vision out into the coming years, He foresaw, not far in the distance, all the dreadful horrors which, as a divine retribution for her centuries of impenitence and accumulated guilt, awaited her. And the vision of all those dreadful horrors awakened His compassion and moved Him to tears. "When He beheld the city," saw what she was then, in all her proud beauty and glory, and then foresaw, as He did, what she would be when once the day of her desolation should have come upon her, "He wept over it." And no wonder. "The days," He exclaims, "shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and shall compass thee around, and shall keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, be-

cause thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Dreadful prediction! And yet, as we know, most literally and in all its terrible horrors, was it fulfilled within forty years from the time when Jesus thus uttered it. Titus, the Roman general, did, to the very letter, all that Jesus had said: surrounded the doomed city with his army, dug trenches and built walls and forts all around it, cut off all possibility of escape, and shut in its citizens to the most dreadful possible distress, until at length, after a siege of five long months, unparalleled in the history of the world for unmitigated horrors by famine, by mutiny and internal feuds, by repeated assaults from the Roman army without, the city was taken, the temple burned, the walls utterly demolished, every building of the whole city destroyed, not one stone being left upon another, and even the very ground upon which the city stood, so as to wipe out every vestige of it, was ploughed up. Over one hundred thousand of the people were at once cruelly put to death by crucifixion, the very mode of death by which Jesus Himself, at the instigation of the Jews, had suffered death. Nearly one hundred thousand were sold into captivity and slavery. Altogether one million and one hundred thousand of Jerusalem's population perished, in various ways, in that dreadful destruction. The description of the horrors of the siege, given by Josephus, the Jewish historian, is thrilling. "Then was all hope of escaping," he writes, "cut off from the Jews, and then did famine devour the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms being full of women and infants dying by starvation, the lanes of the city being full of the dead bodies of the aged, the young men wandering about the mar-

ket places like shadows and falling down dead wheresoever their misery overcame them."

Thus did the most distressing calamities befall Jerusalem. And all this Jesus, in that moment, as He stood there upon Olivet's side, foresaw. He saw war thus mowing down its thousands, and famine and sedition destroying those whom war had spared. He saw the flames thus seizing upon the walls, the towers, the homes, the very temple itself. He saw all those countless numbers which, under the triumphant Romans, were thus put to the sword, all those piles of human carcasses thus heaped upon piles, all those waves of human blood thus flowing and deluging the city. He saw all those eleven hundred thousand perishing in the great slaughter. All these indescribable miseries, in that moment, there on Olivet, were present to His omniscient view.

Was it strange, thus foreseeing Jerusalem's impending doom, that "He wept over it"?

And yet this, after all, was, probably, not the chief cause of the tears which Jesus then shed. The deeper and real cause of those tears was Jerusalem's guilt which brought on her this doom. The sins of which Jerusalem had so long been guilty, the thought of that future and eternal punishment which, in consequence of those sins, awaited so many of its guilty inhabitants; it was this especially, that caused Him thus to weep. He thought in that moment, no doubt, of the unbelief, the impenitence, the hardness of heart, the innumerable crimes of the Jewish people, by which, at last, they had brought on themselves all this fearful doom. He thought of their long rejection of God's appeals to them by His

prophets; of their persistent refusal of all His offered mercy; and especially of their deep guilt involved in their rejection of Him as their Savior, as their culminating crime. And then looking forward into eternity, and combining sin and its consequences, moral cause and everlasting result, His deepest compassions were moved, and He broke into tears. Was it surprising, in view of all that thus in that moment rose before His vision, that He was thus moved and wept?

But there was still another element which entered, in that moment, as a cause into those tears of the Savior over Jerusalem. It was the element of hopelessness. The sad fact that Jerusalem's only or last opportunity of averting the doom which was threatened against her, as a city, was now forever past, was an added grief to the Savior's soul. She had, alas! neglected the day of her visitation. She had filled up the measure of her guilt. The mercy of God had ceased, at last, to plead for her. Divine justice was now at length ready to pour out its vitals of wrath without pity upon her. As upon Sodom and Gomorrah of old, her doom was sealed. The sentence for her destruction had gone forth and it was irrevocable. Her "day of grace" was past. There was now no longer for her even a possibility of salvation. Individuals out of her population would undoubtedly still be subjects of divine grace and would be saved. Many, we know, on the day of Pentecost, were convicted, repented of their sins, believed on Christ, and were saved. But, for Jerusalem as a city, for the Jewish nation as a people, there was now no longer the possibility of being saved. Her day of divine grace was past.

This Jesus knew, and now, as though it were the saddest feature connected with this impending doom, also expressed: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but, alas! now they are hid from thine eyes," that is, "now it is too late, now repentance is impossible, now, O Jerusalem, thy day to be saved is gone. God has given thee up because of thy persistent hardening of thyself against all His patient goodness toward thee."

These were the elements of the Savior's sorrow over Jerusalem, the cause of the tears which He there shed on that Palm Sunday on Olivet's brow.

But let us now notice,

II. The lessons of these tears of Jesus over Jerusalem.

We may see in these tears of Jesus,

(*a*) An evidence of His true humanity. For what is a tear? The most eloquent possible utterance of the human heart. Nature's own spontaneous outflow of love, of sorrow, of pity, of compassion, of grief, of deepest emotion, interest, sympathy. And tears, so far as we know, are exclusively human. Man only, of all God's creatures, weeps. The brute creation does not weep. Devils do not weep. Angels do not. Man only can weep. Only human eyes are ever filled with tears. And one definition of man is that he is a creature that can weep. To weep, then, is a proof of being human. Hence the tears of Jesus prove His true humanity. He was truly divine, the incarnate Son of God, Himself God; for "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But He was also truly human, a true man, having taken on Him-

self our nature, and He was in all respects, sin alone excepted, like us and one with us. And these tears that He here, and also at the grave of Lazarus, shed, prove His true humanity, and show that in Him we have a Savior who, whilst truly God, at the same time, or in the same person, is also man; "flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone," our Elder Brother, having our nature, and, therefore, also able to sympathize with us in all the sorrows and trials to which our nature is here subject. Being thus truly human, actual possessor of a nature in all respects, sin only excepted, like our own, He was able to weep, was capable of sympathy, could, as the apostle expresses it, "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." In His divine nature purely, as pure Deity, not having taken on Himself our human nature, He never could thus really have sympathized with us. As God only He could never have wept. As un-incarnate Deity purely, He could never have shed tears. "For, verily, He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore, in all things, it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

His full possession of humanity made Him capable of tears—capable of being a really sympathizing Savior.

And in view of the fact that He has taken our human nature, in inseparable union with His divine nature, in one glorious Person, the God-man, into

heaven, where He now is, He is now, also, the same compassionate Christ, the same loving and sympathetic Savior that He was when He was here upon earth. No actual tears, probably, now ever moisten His eye. But His heart is still the same. His love is unquenched. His compassion still goes out toward human sorrow in unchecked fulness.

> "Now, in heaven, His tears are over;
> But His heart is still the same.
> Kinsman, Friend, dear Elder Brother,
> Is His everlasting Name."

Be comforted, sorrowing ones, with this precious truth, and ever in your hours of grief, in faith and prayer pillow your troubled souls on Him, and He will give you peace.

This scene of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem shows us, however, also, as a second lesson:

(*b*) The divine Savior's infinite desire for the salvation of sinners.

Those tears, which He there shed over Jerusalem express more forcibly and eloquently than words could do His infinite love for the impenitent and unsaved. They reveal His tender, yearning desire even now yet, in the last moment, if possible, to rescue and save the guilty inhabitants of Jerusalem: save them, if possible, from their sins, save them from the dreadful doom which He saw thus awaiting them. And who were they for whom Jesus thus felt so deeply, and over whom He thus wept so tenderly? His friends? No. His enemies, His malignant persecutors, the persistent rejectors of His gospel, and those who soon would also be His murderers, who would nail Him to the cross, and

who would gloat over His dying agonies. These are the ones upon whom He there looks with eyes of love, and these are there the objects of His tears.

Could Christ, then, possibly, have given a more convincing proof of His pitying and pardoning love for those guilty Jerusalem sinners? No. No words could have spoken with greater power and eloquence than those silent tears of His, the intensity of His love for them.

But those tears are still an expression of that same love for sinners. Those tears still speak, and say to every unsaved soul: "I love you, and I wish to forgive you and save you." The heart of Christ, they say, is still filled with pity for perishing sinners. They show that, if tears were possible in heaven, He still would weep over them His tears of grief; that He still yearns to save them; that He still invites them to come to Him that they might have life; that, if necessary, moved by divine compassion and love, He would gladly again be nailed to the cross, and would suffer over again all the agonies of the atonement, in order to save them from eternal death.

Such is the infinite love of Christ, now, for everyone that is in the way to unending woe. Such love, such pity, such tenderness of heart, such yearning desire, He, now, seated upon His throne of glory in heaven, still feels for every unsaved soul. He thus feels toward you, my hearer, if you are yet unsaved. Jesus now loves and pities you. Gladly would He now save you. Surely you need no further proof of His love for you. Those tears of His attest His interest in you, His sorrow over you, His desire to bestow on you eternal life:

"What could your Redeemer do
More than He hath done for you?
To procure your peace with God,
Could He more than shed His blood?

See, the suff'ring God appears,
Jesus weeps, believe His tears.
Mingled with His blood they cry,
'Why will ye resolve to die?'"

These tears which Jesus thus shed over Jerusalem teach us, however, a third lesson, viz:

(*c*) Our duty, as Christians, concerning the unsaved.

Jesus, in this as in everything, is an example to us. The sight of immortal souls going down to eternal death should touch our hearts and bathe our eyes with burning tears, just as it touched and bathed His. Souls unsaved should be objects of intense anxiety and concern to us, as they here were to the divine Master Himself. The Savior, there on Olivet, weeping in yearning pity and tender love over sinners, is an abiding example, in this respect, to us His followers. As He thus wept over them, so should we. As He longed to save them, so should we. And if we, indeed, have the spirit of our divine Lord, thus will we also feel. Indifference concerning the unsaved, especially our own relatives, acquaintances, friends, is evidence that we have but little of the spirit that was in Christ; that we have entered but little into the real inner life of our holy Christian religion. To care nothing whether our neighbors and friends are saved or unsaved is the way of the world; but it is not the Christian spirit. It is not the spirit which David had, who said: "Rivers of water run down mine eyes because men

keep not Thy law." Nor the spirit of Paul, who said: "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren." And, above all, it is surely not the spirit of Christ, who here weeps over guilty and endangered Jerusalem. Oh, that in some measure, at least, the compassionate love which here, on Olivet's side, filled the Savior's heart for the impenitent, might also fill ours!

From the words here spoken by the Savior, in connection with His tears, we learn yet one more lesson, viz:

(*d*) That sinners have their day of grace: a limited time in which, if they would be saved, they must attend to the things which belong unto their peace.

This was the case with Jerusalem. She had her day: her day of light, of invitation, of opportunity, of offered salvation, of mercy and grace; a day in which she could, through Christ, have secured eternal life. "God's dealings with the Jewish people were long-continued, varied, gracious. They culminated finally in the gift and coming of His Son, in whom divine Wisdom uttered its voice in their hearing; divine Power wrought its marvels of mercy before their very eyes; divine Purity lived its life of loveliness, and divine Love manifested itself in a hundred forms of kindness and pity in the very midst of them."

But this their "day," this time of their "visitation," they did not know. Israel missed the golden chance which God thus gave her. She refused; she spurned the great salvation and rejected the Savior who had thus come to save her. Long and very patiently did God bear with her in her perverseness and wickedness. At length, however, even the

divine mercy was exhausted. Jerusalem's "day of grace" at last ended. All possibility of her salvation finally departed. And all that even the Savior Himself could then do for her was to weep over her, to bathe her with His tears of compassion, and exclaim: "Oh, if only thou hadst, in the day of thy visitation, attended to the things which belong to thy peace! but, alas! now they are hidden from thine eyes." Now it is all over. Now it is too late.

But this is still the order of God's dealings with man. Nations still have their day of moral visitation, their period of moral probation; gracious times of divine goodness and patience and opportunity and appeal to follow righteousness and to love and to serve God. But it is only a "day." If neglected, wasted, abused, if God be rejected, if sin be chosen as its portion, that nation then perishes. God has spoken it, and the history of the world is full of proofs and exhibitions of this inexorable divine law. "The nation and kingdom that will not serve God shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." (Isaiah, lx:12.)

And thus, also, have individuals their "day of visitation," or "day of grace." "How often God visits us," says another, "in His redeeming love: in childhood by a mother's tenderness, in youth by a father's wisdom, in young manhood or womanhood by many voices of the home and the Church, in the prime of life by some chastening providence laying its hand upon us and constraining us to listen and to understand."

Thus have you, now, my hearer, such day of visitation. This present moment is your day of grace. Now you enjoy spiritual blessings in abundance.

The word, the sacraments, the Lord's Day, the ministry, the Holy Spirit, the calls of providence, the conviction of conscience, the offer of a free and full salvation through Christ, all these are now yours. This, then, I repeat, is your "day of grace."

But, remember, it is only a "day." It has its limits. It may, if misimproved, at any moment, end. God's patience with you may soon be exhausted. The Holy Spirit, grieved, may depart. Death may cut you down in the midst of your sins.

> "There is a time, we know not when,
> A point we know not where,
> That marks the destiny of men
> To glory or despair."

In the river above the Fall of Niagara there is a point called "Past Redemption Point." The reason why it is so called is, because if a vessel goes beyond that point, it is lost, and no power can bring it back. And, dear friends, there is a "past-redemption point" in all our lives if we do not turn to Jesus; and if we get beyond that point, nothing can bring us back, and, consequently, like the vessel, we are lost.

Today, then, my impenitent hearer, awake, I pray you, from your sleep of sin, and seek an interest in the blood of Christ. It is now not yet too late. You still can be saved. Jesus loves you. He desires to save you. He is able to save you. Those tears over Jerusalem prove his love for sinners. They prove His love for you. And since Jesus thus loves your soul, will not you, yourself, love it? Since He thus wept over your sins, will not you weep over them, repent of them, and forsake them?

"Did Christ o'er sinners weep?
And shall our cheeks be dry?
Let floods of penitential grief
Burst forth from every eye.

The Son of God in tears!
Angels! with wonder see!
Be thou astonished, O my soul!
He shed those tears for thee.

He wept that we might weep,
Each sin demands a tear;
In heaven alone no sin is found
And there's no weeping there."

X.

THE LIMITATIONS OF PRAYER.

Holy Thursday.

COLLECT.

O God, our Refuge and Strength, who art the Author of all godliness: be ready, we beseech Thee, to hear the devout prayers of Thy Church; and grant that those things which we ask faithfully, we may obtain effectually; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

X.

"And He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

MATTHEW, XXVI:39.

IN this prayer of our Savior we learn distinctly the truth that there are limitations to the power and efficacy of prayer. The very language which Jesus in this "Gethsemane prayer" of His, uses, shows us that God does not grant or bestow, in every instance, in answer to prayer, the very thing prayed for. The language of the Savior is: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," implying clearly that there were some things for which even He, God's own divine Son, might pray, which, nevertheless, God, for wise moral reasons, could not grant; that there may, indeed, in the mind or purposes of God, be certain grounds or ends to be accomplished which render it morally an impossibility to bestow, even upon Christ Himself, as the God-man, the specific thing for which He prays. "If it be possible," was the prayer of Jesus, "let this cup," this bitter cup of my atoning death upon the cross, "pass from me." It was, however, as we know, morally an impossibility that it should pass from Him, since only by that cup not passing from the Savior's lips, as He here prayed that it might, could God's high moral purpose to save our lost world be

accomplished. Hence, even though Jesus prayed so earnestly, and prayed thrice, that it might pass undrained away from Him, that cup did not pass away, but He was necessitated, in order to save the world, to drink it. Viewed simply in reference to the specific thing prayed for, that prayer of our Savior, then, in the garden of Gethsemane, was an unanswered prayer. Jesus did not receive the one special thing for which He there offered prayer to God. The cup did not pass away.

Many other instances of unanswered prayers are recorded in Scripture: prayers, too, that were offered by persons of undoubted piety, and offered, also, for objects entirely within the scripturally-auhorized scope of prayer. David, *e. g.*, prayed for the recovery of his sick child, and yet the child died. St. Paul besought the Lord thrice that his "thorn in the flesh," some bodily ailment from which he was suffering, might depart from him, but the "thorn" remained, and the apostle's prayer, for that one specific thing, was not answered. And so, among almost the last utterances which he was inspired to pen, are the touching words: "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." He, no doubt, had prayed for his recovery, but Trophimus, notwithstanding his prayers in his behalf, was still not recovered when that Epistle to Timothy was written, nor is there any evidence that, in answer to his prayers, Trophimus ever recovered.

Thus have Christians of the most eminent piety, and thus did even our blessed Savior Himself, pray for certain things, both for themselves and for others, which God, nevertheless, for reasons determined wholly by Himself, did not grant.

The conclusion, therefore, forces itself upon us that there are limitations to the reach and efficacy of prayer. What these limitations are, precisely, it is difficult, if not, perhaps, impossible accurately and fully to define. Still there evidently are such limitations or moral bounds to prayer, beyond which our prayers for specific objects have no potency, and which God does not answer in the exact way we expect, no matter how truly Christian and scriptural, both in spirit and form, the prayers may be. Among these,

I. There is the Limitation, first, of Divine Love in view of our Ignorance.

We do not know whether what we pray for may not, even for ourselves, be an evil, instead of a blessing, and hence, God, in very love to us, may sometimes not grant what we ask for, just as wise and loving parents withhold from a child what it asks for because the bestowal or possession of the thing asked for by the child would, they know, prove to the child an injury or even cause its death. A child might, *e. g.*, see some arsenic, and suppose it to be sugar, and ask for it; but the parent, out of very love to the child, in spite of its asking, would not give it what it thus asks for. Is God less loving?

II. There is, also, in prayer, secondly, the Limitation of Divine Purpose.

God desires always to bestow upon His children, or those who pray to Him, not simply some of His divine goodness, but the highest possible degree of it, and the highest possible kind, also, of it. He wishes always to give us not only the good thing which we ask for, and with which, perhaps, we would be satisfied, but He desires always to give us

something higher and better than, in our low conceptions of His goodness, we think of asking for. In other words: God always wants to give us all that He can find it morally possible to give us. But, this divine purpose always thus to give us the better or best of His gifts, necessitates Him sometimes to withhold from us that which is only good which we have asked Him to give us. His very desire to bestow better blessings leads Him to deny to us inferior ones. He denies those for which we ask, simply because if He granted them to us, the very granting of them, in the nature of things, would make it impossible for Him to bestow upon us the better blessings He desires to give us. The son of a merchant, who was to succeed his father in his business, might deem it a great hardship to be compelled to apply himself to every menial drudgery and humble detail of that business, and thus, by practical experience, learn slowly each branch or department of it, and he might ask his father to relieve him of all such application and study. But the wise father would refuse his request. He purposes to make him heir of all his business, of all his wealth, and he knows that without this previous thorough apprenticeship he is incapable of receiving and holding what he thus purposes to bestow. And so God is limited, in the granting often of our requests, by the very smallness of our requests, and by His purpose and desire to give us, in the end, better blessings than those for which we ask. He may not, *e. g.*, grant the prayer to spare the life of the child that is sick, because He purposes, through the death of that child, to bestow both upon it and upon those who remain and miss it and mourn for it infinitely richer

blessings than could possibly have been theirs had their prayer for the child to live been granted. A whole nation may go down upon its knees, and may pray God to spare the life of a wounded and dying president. But that precious life is not spared. Garfield dies, though millions pray, because God purposes, through the bleeding channel which the very death of that wounded president will make to the heart of the nation, to confer upon it infinitely more and better blessings than the nation could possibly have received had he not thus died. His death, *i. e.*, the refusal to grant the nation's prayer for his life, in the very nature of the case, is necessary to the bestowal of these higher blessings. That becomes the channel through which alone those higher blessings could come. And hence, also, that channel is opened, notwithstanding all the prayers of millions of Christian hearts that it might not be, and through it, as through another Red Sea, God leads the nation up into the heirship of higher and richer national blessings than could possibly otherwise have come to it.

For the sake of the better things, then, that God wishes to bestow upon us, He often withholds from us the special thing that we ask, the bestowal of which would make the bestowal of the better things impossible.

III. There are Limitations, also, evidently, in the scope or range of Objects of Prayer.

It is manifest, at first thought, that there are some things which, in the very nature of the case, lie, as objects of request, outside of the domain of prayer. To pray, *e. g.*, that a certain material object might be both black and white at the same time, that two

and two might make five, that the offerer of the prayer might have the power given him to be in two different and distant places at the same moment of time: all such requests would, it is evident, be an utter waste of time, for it would be praying for things inherently and necessarily impossible. The things thus prayed for are, by the very constitution and order which God has Himself established, beyond the possibility of being granted. And so there are other requests or prayers which me might offer, but which God, evidently, no matter how earnestly we might ask Him for them, would not, and even could not, consistently with His own character, and His own express declarations, grant to us. They are morally impossible. Suppose, *e. g.*, we should ask God to aid us in the overflow of Christianity in the world; or should ask Him to give us success in the commission of some crime; or suppose we should ask Him to give us another Savior, or a new plan of redemption, or a different moral decalogue. Would God, or could God, consistently with what He is, and with what He has said, grant such petitions? Certainly not. The very character, then, of God, the very order of things, both natural and moral, established in harmony with His character, and in view of man's moral relations to Him, make it absolutely impossible that He should, literally and absolutely, grant anything whatever that men might choose to ask.

There is an evident limitation, then, in the range of objects for which we may legitimately pray. The object prayed for must be such an object only as God can, consistently with His own-established natural and moral economy, grant to us, in answer to prayer.

IV. There are, manifestly, Limitations, also, in this matter of prayer, in the Motives which prompt men to pray.

This is so already in our mutual human relations to each other. The answer to the question: "What do you want the thing solicited for? What end have you in view?" when men ask a favor from us, largely determines whether we will grant the favor they ask, or not grant it. If a person were to ask a friend for a rope with which to hang himself, or if a child were to ask a father for money with which to purchase a pistol with which to shoot himself, or if a clerk were to ask permission to carry a key to the store in which he is employed, in order that he might, at night, introduce some thieving associate in order to rob the store, the requests would, of course, at once be peremptorily refused. Why? Simply because the motive, the end in view, the object to be accomplished by the request, are bad. The thing requested is not, in itself, bad. On the contrary, each of these objects solicited might, and would, if asked from a better motive and for a different and worthier purpose, be cheerfully granted. But in the cases supposed, the motive, or end, makes the granting of it, under the circumstances, both unwise and unsafe, harmful and criminal, and our very sense of right, both to ourselves and to those making such requests, compels us at once to refuse them.

In our prayers to God, there are similar limitations arising thus from the motives from which we pray, and from the moral end which we aim to attain by our prayers. The motive may not be such that God can, consistently with His own glory, honor. The end aimed at in the prayer may be such as God can

not consistently allow to be attained. It may be altogether personal, and selfish, and with little or no regard for God's glory. A minister, *e. g.*, might pray very earnestly for the conversion of sinners in order to enhance his own glory. A Sunday-school teacher might pray for the conversion of a scholar from a similar motive. A farmer might pray for large harvests only to add to his wealth and gratify his avarice. A merchant might pray for business success only to outstrip a business rival. A man might pray for health only because of a selfish shrinking from weakness and pain. Prayers for such motives God, of course, does not answer. Such prayers He could not, consistently with His own high character, answer. For to do so would be to make Himself a party with those who thus pray in all the selfishness and sin from which such prayers may have sprung. And such prayers He has, also, explicitly declared He will not answer: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

Prayer, then, in order to be answered, must be in entirely right moral adjustments. It must be right in its motive, or in the moral end at which it aims. That motive must, in its final analysis and supreme element, be the glory of God, and that end must be the highest moral and spiritual good, both to ourselves and others, consistent with that glory. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

V. In this matter of prayer, there are, also, Limitations in the Promises of God concerning answer to prayer.

God has nowhere in His word promised to answer

every prayer that men offer. He has not unconditionally promised to give us just anything and everything, temporal and spiritual, that we ask for. He has limited His giving by certain fixed and unchanging moral conditions. One condition is definiteness and postiveness in our desires: "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed; let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Another condition is faith: "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Another condition is forgiveness: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Another is importunity: "And He spake of a parable to them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." Another condition is, that prayer be always offered in the name of Christ Jesus, as man's only way of access to God: "Whatsoever ye shall ask, in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Another condition is, that our prayers be always in accordance with the will of God: "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." And so there are still other conditions.

God has manifestly, then, limited the efficacy or reach of prayer by His own divinely-appointed conditions of prayer. All His promises, therefore, to answer prayer, which we find in the Bible, however unqualified and unlimited when taken by themselves, isolated or separated from the "anology of faith," or general teaching of Scripture concerning prayer,

must all be interpreted in the light of these conditioning principles, which God has so clearly thus declared as limitations to prayer. One passage must be explained and understood by the light thrown upon it by every other passage upon the same subject. John, *e. g.*, in his Gospel, writes: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." In his first Epistle, however, this same apostle, in the verse already quoted, says: "This is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask according to His will, He heareth us."

Seemingly unqualified promises to answer prayer must, therefore, I repeat, be taken with such qualifications as elsewhere, in the Bible, God has attached to such promises. This limitation of conditions, thus expressed in parallel Scripture-passages, must be always clearly recognized. We are heard, let us remember, only when we ask anything which is according to God's will. Observe the limitation—according to His will. It is not said that we shall have everything we ask for. The blessing is not dependent on the fervency of our desires, the earnestness and importunity of our beseeching. The availableness of our prayers turns upon our asking according to God's will.

This relieves prayer from an objection frequently urged against it. The question is often raised: How can God alter the course of things to accommodate the desire of an individual? Would not this be giving up the control of things to the caprice of short-sighted creatures? But, observe, it is not said that God will do according to our desires, but that He will hear us when we desire according to His will.

God's will, not our desires, then, is the final determiner of what He does. I have sometimes thought that the views entertained in respect to prayer indicate, on the part of those who utter them, a forgetfulness that there are any other interests to be regarded besides their own. There seems, sometimes, to be a feeling that God must let us have what we want, just because we have asked Him for it, or just because we want it. But we should remember that we are exceedingly little among the creatures of God's care; that our necessities are less than the dust in the balance, when weighed against the interests of the universe; that we can not tell what it is best for God to do in exercising His benevolence for the welfare of all creatures, nor how our insignificant desires may run contrary to God's all-wise plans.

Let us note well, then, the words of John: "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." Here, as you observe, a restraint is put upon our desires; God's will is to mold our desires, and then when our desires are for such things as are pleasing to Him, then we have assurance that we shall receive that for which we pray.

VI. Another Limitation to the efficacy of prayer lies in Human Inactivity in connection with prayer.

God answers prayer, but His law is, to answer our prayers only when we ourselves do all in our power to answer them, *i. e.*, God answers them through our own effort to answer them. Let me illustrate. A student is anxious to become an accomplished scholar. An eminent teacher says to him: Come to me and I will give you an education. I know that

you are poor, but I will bestow upon you what you seek without money and without price. The scholar gratefully accepts the offer. He goes at once and takes his place at the teacher's feet. But how does he expect to receive an education? Will it be given to him to eat like a dinner, or to be put on like a suit of clothes? He knows better. He understands the conditions of accepting that invitation. The teacher will give him books to read, lessons to learn, problems to solve, experiments to try. He will have to work long years under the teacher's directions in order to secure that which he asks and which is given to him, so far as the teacher can give it, simply for the asking.

And so God deals with us. He tells us to pray every morning, "Give us this day our daily bread." Yet He does not expect us to stay on our knees and keep on asking until He sends angels to feed us. No; that petition is for His blessing upon our daily toil. And He deals the same way with us in spiritual things. We are to ask, not as helpless infants, but as men. We are to ask because we mean to do all that we can to secure the result, and we want God to do for us only what we can not do. Such asking is manly. It is rational. It is not that of sheiks and beggars. The man who only prays to God to make him holy, shows that he has not the first conception of what holiness is. Holiness is character, and must always be a growth. To seek for it as a gift is as absurd as if a child should ask to be made at once, by a miracle, a full-grown man. God has promised, and will give freely, all the grace we need, if we seek it in an honest, earnest, manly way. But all other asking is as vain as the vain

repetitions of the heathen. God does not hear us for our much speaking, but because He sees in our hearts a true and strong desire to make a good use of the things for which we ask. As Dr. Cuyler says: "No farmer is such an idiot as to look for a crop of wheat unless he has plowed and sowed in his fields. In prayer we must first be sure that we are doing our part if we expect God to do His part." There is a legitimate sense in which every Christian should do his utmost for the answering of his own prayers. When a certain venerable minister was called upon to pray in a missionary convention, he first fumbled in his pocket, and when he had tossed the coin into the plate, he said: "I can not pray until I have given something." He prepaid his prayer. For the churches in these days to pray "Thy kingdom come," and then spend more money on jewelry and cigars than in the enterprise of foreign missions, looks almost like a solemn farce. God has no blessings for stingy pockets. When I hear requests for prayer for the conversion of a son or daughter, I say to myself: How much is that parent doing to win that child to Christ? The godly wife who makes her daily life attractive to her husband has a right to ask God for the conversion of that husband; she is co-operating with the Holy Spirit, and prepaying her heart's request. God never defaults; but He requires that we prove our faith by our works, and that we never ask for a blessing that we are not ready to labor for. Genuine, self-denying, prevailing prayer is always prepaid; the offerer of it is always willing to make any sacrifice to secure the blessing which his soul desires.

VII. There is also yet in prayer the Limitation of Divine Sovereignty.

The will of God is, in this matter of prayer, as in every other matter, the supreme will. His is the ultimate and final authority. To Him, because of the sovereignty of His being and the supremacy of His government, must be left, in all our asking, the decision whether to grant or to withhold. "Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt," is, therefore, the essential spirit and life of all true or legitimate prayer. But this divine sovereignty manifestly implies limitation. God's will and our will in prayer are not always in harmony. When our will asks, God's will often determines to withhold. As Sovereign, He has the authority and right to do so. His will or ours must rule. It is infinitely best in itself, and best for us, that His will, limiting and thwarting and denying ours as it may, should always finally rule.

Prayer is not mere asking, but it is asking in faith, submitting all, while we ask, to God's will, who knows what is best, and whose silent blessing often is found hidden, not in the granting, but in the denial to us of our requests. As the devout Faber has so sweetly sung:

"I worship Thee, sweet will of God,
And all Thy ways adore,
And every day I live, I seem
To love Thee more and more.

He always wins who sides with God;
To him no chance is lost;
God's will is sweetest to us when
It triumphs at our cost.

Ill, that He blesses, is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet will."

In view, now, of the limitations to prayer which I have thus pointed out, let us learn a few lessons:

(*a*) We see the folly of making, as Professor Tyndall some years ago did, the asking of some one certain thing the final test of the efficacy of prayer. His proposal was that Christians should all unite to pray for rain to be sent at a certain prescribed time. If God sent it at that prescribed time, just when, and as those who prayed asked for it to be sent, that would prove that He does hear prayer. If not, then the conclusion, on the other hand, must be accepted that God does not hear prayer. But what folly, in view of what has been said, to propose such a test! For when has God ever proposed to submit to such a test? What kind of a motive would that be to pray from? What evidence have we that the conditions of all true prayer have been complied with? How do we know that the thing thus chosen to be prayed for is in accordance with the will of God? What an ignoring of all the limitations of prayer! How contrary the whole thing to the true and essential character of prayer!

(*b*) We learn what folly, at any time, to lose faith in prayer, because some one particular thing for which we prayed has not been granted. God, as we have seen, has nowhere promised always to give us just what we ask for. He does promise always to give us what is best for us. He does hear prayer, and does, also, in some way, always answer it; if not in the bestowal of the exact thing for which we

prayed, yet always in some form, and always in that form, also, which will bring to us the richest and best blessing in the end.

(*c*) We learn, also, in view of what has been said, how grateful we ought to be to God that He has thus set these limitations to our power in prayer.

What a rich spiritual discipline these limitations to our power in prayer give us! What evils we would all invoke upon ourselves if we were always able to obtain all we pray for! What rich blessings we would miss if God would always let us choose instead of His choosing for us! How much better, in every way, to let God choose for us, and cheerfully to allow divine wisdom and love to decide the answers to our prayers, than that our fallible wisdom and short-sighted self-love should decide them!

A story which we read many years ago, in childhood, perhaps, may show what we mean. A boy was apparently dying; his mother's prayer was in substance this: "O God, save my boy! I can not give him up; I will not give him up; he must not die; he shall not die; O God, spare him; grant me this, and I ask for nothing else." The prayer was answered; the boy was spared, and grew up to be a profligate and a debauchee, and ended his days in shame. The mother lived to see that mercy would have been shown in not answering her prayer, and that the answer was an answer of wrath. The story is, perhaps, not true, but whether true or false is immaterial; it illustrates the point. We may set our hearts on this thing or on that, and persistently and pertinaciously seek it, without the spirit of holy acquiescence in the will of God, and God, in His displeasure, may give us exactly what we ask, in order

that our sin may receive its most appropriate punishment. Who would dare to say to the Almighty, "O God, let me have my own way!"? How much better to say, as did the Master in Gethsemane, "Not my will, but Thine be done!"

Let us be grateful, then, for these very restraints and limitations which God, in love, has thus thrown around prayer, and let us always offer our prayers in entire submission to His will. Let us, with filial confidence and freedom, ask God for what we want; but let us, at the same time, remember, that our vision is short-sighted, that our judgment is defective, that what we ask for may possibly not be the best thing to ask for. And hence, let all be deferred and subordinated to God's will. Let us make, in spirit if not in words, the Savior's Gethsemane prayer ours: "Father, not my will, but Thine be done." In the words of a sweet hymn, let us ever, in our prayers, say:

"Not what we wish, but what we want,
Let mercy still supply;
The good we ask not, Father, grant,
The ill we ask, deny."

XI.

THE FINISHED REDEMPTION.

Good Friday

COLLECT.

Merciful and everlasting God, who hast not spared Thine only Son, but delivered Him up for us all, that He might bear our sins upon the cross; grant that our hearts may be so fixed with steadfast faith in Him that we may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the same, Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

XI.

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost."

JOHN, xix:30.

DURING the six hours that our Savior hung upon the cross, seven "sayings" or "utterances" fell from his lips. The first was a prayer for His enemies: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The second was a word of pardon and assurance of salvation to the penitent, dying malefactor: "Verily, I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The third was a word of filial love and care for His mother: "Woman, behold thy son," and then to the disciple whom He especially loved: "Behold thy mother." The fourth was a piercing cry of bitterest agony of soul under the hiding from Him of His divine Father's face: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The fifth expressed His bodily want, His physical struggle with death: "I thirst." The sixth declared the completion of His redemptive work: "It is finished." And the seventh, the last of His utterances in the great tragedy, was a dying committal of His soul into the keeping of His heavenly Father: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Seven utterances, full, indeed, of rich and precious meaning; seven words, laden with infinite instruc-

tion and comfort and hope; seven sayings, rich in valuable lessons to us, who, by faith, have taken this expiring and atoning Christ as the ground of our hope and assurance of salvation.

In looking at these sayings of our Savior, uttered while there on the cross, we notice that both the first and the last were addressed to God as His Father: thus revealing His inseparable divine unity with God, His intercessory power with Him, His living and dying trust in Him: a symbol of the truth that His earth-life was both begun and ended with God. God, as His Father, to Him was all, both in life and in death.

It is significant, also, that, even when thus enduring the agony of the cross, three of these dying sayings of Christ were prayers and thoughts for others. What a revelation of His divine unselfishness and compassion that is!

The fact that these dying sayings of Christ were seven in number, a number which is universally in Scripture the symbol of completeness, is also here, no doubt, full of significance: a symbol, no doubt, of the completeness of the redemption which was then and there wrought out for our lost world by that death of Christ.

But we have not time now to dwell longer upon these general thoughts on the sayings of our Savior on the cross. We must limit our thoughts. A consideration of only one of them, the sixth in the order of their utterance, the words announced as our text, will afford matter more than sufficient for the hour before us: "It is finished."

There are two views which we may take in our consideration of these words; and both of which,

indeed, we must take in order to derive from them their full or entire meaning. We may regard them, first, as the utterance of the man, Jesus; and we may regard them, secondly, and especially, as the utterance of the God-Man, Christ Jesus.

Some, I know, who call themselves by the name of Christ, limit their interpretation of these words to the first of the views just named, and reject the second. "These," they say, "were the dying words of the man, Jesus." But to do so is surely to rob them of their full significance. For, if they are not the words of one who was more than a mere man, if they are not true also, in the second view we have given them, then they are worthless as words of salvation to our lost world in the first view. Jesus was man, undoubtedly, in the truest and fullest sense. But He was not only man. He was also the "God-Man." And hence, in both senses, both as the words of the man, Jesus, and of the God-Man, Christ Jesus, must these words, "It is finished," be interpreted, in order to fully apprehend and exhaust their divine significance.

Let us regard them then:

I. As the Dying Utterance of the Mere Man, Jesus.

Thus regarded, these words of His: "It is finished," express, we may assume, His joy that now, at last, the end of His earth-life had come, and that now, finally, His period of subjection to all the various ills of life: to temptation, and sorrow, and labor, and weariness, and pain, and all the trials incidental to human experience, that all these now, at last, were over and past.

For thus, no doubt, Jesus, as a man, as a good man, thinking of Him now only in His humanity, did, in that closing hour of His life here upon earth, feel. Our belief in the reality and perfection of His humanity compels us to think so. One of our misconceptions of our Savior is our confused and imperfect apprehension of the duality of His person. We think of Him either as God or as man; but we find it difficult to conceive of Him as being, in one person, and at the same time, both perfect God and perfect man. When we think of His divine nature, we find it difficult to remember that He has also a most true and perfect human nature; and, when we think of His human nature, we are in danger of forgetting that He possesses also a perfect divine nature. Thus it has always been. In this very misconception of the dual nature of the person of Christ, and of the relation of these two natures to each other, all error and heresy, in Christological thinking, has sprung, from the very beginning of Christianity until now. Some have magnified His deity and denied His humanity; and others have made much of His perfect humanity and denied his deity. Both are mere half truths, and, therefore, errors. For Christ was, and is, both God and man. In His divine nature He was true God: co-equal in all divine attributes to the Father. And, in His human nature, sin excepted, He was true man: possessing, in all respects, both a body and soul precisely like the body and soul which each one of us possesses. As the Apostle Paul teaches: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He, also, Himself, likewise took part of the same."

And not only did He possess this same bodily and

spiritual nature, sin excepted, which we possess, but He put Himself, also, in all respects, in our true human condition, and subjected Himself to, and passed through, all our true human experiences. Life, in its customary experiences, was to Him just what life to each one of us is. "He was in all points," we read, "tempted (or tried) like as we are, yet without sin." Like us, He labored for His daily bread. Like us, He was surrounded by sin and exposed to temptation. Like us, He had His friends and His enemies. Like us, He was subject to weariness, to hunger, to thirst, to need of sleep and rest. Like us, He was, at times, misunderstood, misrepresented, persecuted, wronged, hated. Like us, He had His seasons of loneliness and sorrow, and His times also of special gladness and joy. Like us, He suffered by bereavement; parting with those He loved, and weeping, as we so often must, by the bier and the grave of beloved friends.

Thus, in all respects, in every experience which makes up human life, sin alone always excepted, was Jesus, our Savior, like us; and His life, while here on earth, was, in everything, like ours.

> "We tread the path our Master trod;
> We bear the cross He bore;
> And every thorn that wounds our feet,
> His temples pierced before."

And hence, also, when, at last, He hung there upon the cross, and knew, as He did, that now all this earth-life to which He had humbled Hismelf, and all these weary, sorrowing and suffering years to which, in His voluntary subjection of Himself to our human condition, He had given Himself, that all this

now was over, He might well exclaim, as He does: "It is finished; the blessed end of my days of trial and sorrow here on earth at last has come; soon I shall enter upon my eternal reward."

This, in view of His humanity, we may assume was one meaning of His words, when He thus exclaimed: "It is finished." And hence these words, "It is finished," were really His triumphant death song. They were a pæan of victory, shouted by the human soul of Jesus, bidding a glad farewell to earth, and rejoicing in view of the better and eternal life to which He was now about to ascend.

And, in this sense, we all, who are Christ's, when our death hour comes, may also use them. Thus millions of Christians have gladly used them. They were happy that the end of earth to them had come; that they could say: "It is finished." They were glad that they could bid farewell to the world, that they could lay down at last the heavy burdens of life, that they could rest from their long warfare, that they could end their labors, that they could be relieved from all their infirmities, and could be freed fully from their sins, and could at last depart and be forever in peace and bliss with Christ.

But these words, "It is finished," as they there upon Calvary fell from the Savior's lips, have an infinitely deeper signification than all this mere interpretation of them as the utterance only of a dying man. They are words that express not simply the triumpant ending of the experiences of the Savior's life here on earth in His human nature and condition; but they are words which express also the completion of His infinitely greater and more important Messianic work; His work as the God-man; His

great redemptive work, which was all accomplished when, in that hour, He, as both the Son of God and son of man, there laid down His life upon the cross.

Let us, then, consider these words: "It is finished,"

II. As the Utterance Especially of the God-man, Christ Jesus.

To get their full and real meaning, thus must they be regarded: not as the words of Jesus only, but of Christ Jesus; not of the man only, but of the God-man; not of the son only of Joseph and Mary, but of the eternal Son of God.

Thus regarded, in this their Messianic or mediatorial sense, it may be assumed:

(*a*) That the Savior, in His use upon the cross of these words, "It is finished," meant to declare that then, in His atoning death, all the typical and ceremonial sacrifices of the Old or Mosaic Dispensation, were fulfilled, or "finished."

This was what was then accomplished. That death of Christ, as the great Anti-type, ended or finished the whole Old Testament ritual. The uplifting of the brazen serpent in the wilderness; the intended offering of Isaac by Abraham upon Mount Moriah; the killing of the Passover lamb, and the sprinkling of its blood over the lintels and the door posts of the homes of the Israelites; the ritual of the scapegoat, laden with the imputed or imposed sins of the people, and then driven away into the wilderness, never to be seen again, its fellow or mate having been first slain as an atoning sacrifice; the daily morning and evening sacrifice at the tabernacle, and, later, at the temple; the solemn sacrifices on the

great day of atonement, when the high priest alone, bearing with him the blood of sacrifice, could enter the holy of holies, and there, sprinkling it upon the mercy seat, secure pardon both for his own sins and for the sins of the people; all these "types" and "ceremonies" of the Old Dispensation, Jesus, in these words, "It is finished," means to say, are now, in this death of His, accomplished, fulfilled, "finished." "This death of mine," He means to say, "ends the whole typical economy. I am the great Anti-type of all the old or Levitical types; the priest of whom the entire Aaronic priesthood was the shadow. Mine is the blood of which all the blood of beast and bird in all the Mosaic Dispensation was the emblem. 'Ceremonies,' 'sacrifices,' 'altars,' human 'priesthoods,' 'shedding of blood,' all now, in this My death, are realized. The one great sacrifice, to which they all steadily, for many hoary centuries, pointed forward, as the hope of the world, is, here and now, in this My death upon Calvary, made. Now it is all finished."

But these words: "It is finished," as then uttered by the Savior there upon the cross, mean, also, as we know:

(*b*) That then all the prophecies of the Old Testament, pointing forward to, or foretelling the vicarious death of the Messiah, were fulfilled or "finished."

Then, for example, was Zechariah's prophecy fulfilled: "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver"; for then, as the evangelist tells us, "One of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them: 'What will ye give me and I will deliver Him unto you?' And they

covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."

Then, also, was David's prophecy of Him fulfilled: "They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture"; for we read: "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part: and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout: They said, therefore, among themselves: 'Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be.' These things, therefore, the soldiers did."

And that other prophecy: "A bone of Him shall not be broken"; for we read: "Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with Jesus, but when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs."

And the prophecy, also: "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced:" for, is it not written in the narrative of Christ's death: "But one of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced His side, and forthwith there came out blood and water"?

And Isaiah's wonderful prophecy, penned seven hundred years before: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth," how minutely it was all fulfilled in that death of Christ there upon Calvary!

And so with innumerable other Messianic predictions. They were all marvelously fulfilled, or "finished," in the death of Jesus. And hence, suspended there upon the cross, and seeing or knowing all this, He exclaims: "It is finished." "'Prophecy,' as well as 'type' and 'ceremony,' is now all here realized in my death. I am the Christ of whom not only Moses

in the Law, but of whom, also, the prophets did write."

What gratitude should not this fact, that prophecy was thus so minutely fulfilled in Christ, and especially in His death, awaken in our hearts! How clearly it proves to us His Messiahship! How sure, with this bright evidence from prophecy thus shining upon the cross, we can feel that Jesus, who there died for us, was, indeed, as He claimed, the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and that our faith, therefore, in Him, as a Savior, rests upon a solid and immovable foundation!

But, these dying words of Jesus, "It is finished," have yet one other and most precious meaning which gives them to us, as lost sinners, infinite value. Jesus, by these words, "It is finished," most expressively declares:

(*c*) That in this Death of His, there upon Calvary, a full Atonement is made, or "finished" for the Sins of the World.

This dying expression of Jesus means that the work of making satisfaction to God for human guilt was then, by those sufferings and by that death, as man's substitute, of Jesus Christ, once for all fully done; and that now man needs for his pardon and justification before God no other ground of merit than that.

The active redemptive work of Christ, in behalf of man, began, really, already in His advent and incarnation, when, as the Divine Word, He was made flesh. It continued and manifested itself all along in His life while He was here upon earth, in His miracles, His teachings, in His holy living, during all His stay of three and thirty years here among

men. Its culmination, however, was in His death. The cross, at last, was where redemption for us was actually, at last, achieved; where the real death-grapple, finally, between Christ and Satan, for the possession of our world, was fought; where the penalty of our guilt was, at length, fully and finally laid upon Him; where He really drank for us the bitter cup of the wrath of a just and righteous God; and where He, in some sense, actually took our place as sinners, and truly bore, in His own innocent person, what, because of our sins, was due to us; and, by doing so, made it possible, even under the righteous government of an infinitely holy God, for us to be pardoned, sanctified and saved. Then was what He called His "hour." On the cross, I say, is where the work of our redemption was actually wrought. All that Jesus Christ did and suffered for us before, was only secondary and preparatory to this, His final, His great work for us then. And all, also, that He did afterward: His resurrection, His ascension, His intercession; and all that He is now doing, and will do, through all time and through all eternity, will be only the continuance, the fruitage, the outcome, of what He did then.

The hour when Jesus died, then, I repeat, is the hour which marks the culminating moment on the dial plate of both time and eternity: the hour decreed in the councils of heaven before man was created; the hour of hours toward which all the purposes and revelations of God to man converge; the hour when redemption, as the work of Christ, was, once for all, finished.

From this subject let us now, in conclusion, learn several practical lessons. And,

1. Let us here be impressed by a sense of the completeness of Christ's work for us as a ground of justification before God.

One of the most frequent and plausible and fatal, also, of Satan's temptations, is that we ourselves must, in some way, do something to purchase or merit salvation; that we must ourselves, in some manner, make, in whole or in part, atonement for our sins. But these dying words of Christ rebuke all such seeking of self-salvation. Jesus here tells us that we neither can make, nor need to make any atonement for our sins. The whole work is already done. He did it. "It is finished," He says. It is not left by Him incomplete, unfinished, needing something yet to be added to it by us to make it what we need; but, in the fullest possible sense, it is, as He there upon Calvary wrought it, "finished." Those death agonies of Christ, those vicarious sufferings of His, made there on the cross in the sinner's stead, are full payment of all his debt, an abundant satisfaction for all his guilt. God asks no more and will accept no more. To offer to Him this finished work of Christ, there made on Calvary, is, therefore, as sinners, our one sole and all-sufficient ground of justification and acceptance with God.

Let this, then, my hearer, be the one only ground which you do offer, and upon which you do rest your hope. Rely only on this "finished" work, for you, of Christ. It is a good, a sure foundation upon which to build your hope of heaven. "He that believeth in Him shall never be confounded." Then,

2. We learn from this subject, also, the real cost to our Savior of our salvation.

He had actually to die for us. Only when once,

on the cross, He had actually, Himself, endured for us the penalty of our guilt, just before He was to give up His spirit into the hands of God, and be taken down from the cross, only then could He say: "It is finished." Because only then was it really "finished"; only then was the purchase price of our salvation actually paid. We often forget this. We often forget how much our salvation cost Christ. It was a great price He paid. It was only by becoming our full substitute under the law, only by becoming accursed before God in our stead, only thus did He achieve, or could He achieve, salvation for us. It was by His death for us, that He saved us from death. We live because He died.

> "Death and the curse were in our cup;
> O Christ, 't was full for Thee.
> But Thou hast drained the last dark drop,
> 'T is empty now for me."

In remembrance of what our redemption thus cost our Savior, we learn:

3. The duty of grateful love to Him for what He has thus suffered and done for us.

No argument, surely, is needed to convince us of this. One moment's reflection only, one look only at the sight of our suffering Redeemer as He there bleeds and dies for us upon the cross, is sufficient to convince us that He, of all other beings in the universe, is entitled to our supreme love. Beholding Him there; witnessing the death which there, out of pure unselfish pity and love, He suffers for us; and hearing Him then, at last, as the work is completed, in holy triumph exclaim: "It is finished," "I have suffered it all for them," instinctively our hearts

thrill toward Him with grateful love, and we say: "We ought to love Thee, O Christ, for what Thou hast thus done for us. Help us to love Thee, and help us ever to love Thee more: for Thou art worthy."

"I can not love Thee as I would,
Yet pardon me, O Highest Good.
My life and all I call my own,
I lay before Thy mercy throne:
And, if a thousand lives were mine,
O dearest Lord, they should be Thine.
And scanty would the offering be:
So richly hast Thou loved me."

But there is, also, a lesson here,

4. Concerning our duty of firmly and always and only trusting for pardon and salvation in this finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is both the blessed privilege and duty of every human being. Because Christ is thus, as we have seen, a perfect Savior, and because His work for us is a finished work, let our faith, or trust, also, in Him for salvation, be an implicit and all-reliant faith. Let us all now, on this Good Friday, with His cross so near us, thus trust ourselves wholly and only to Him for salvation. Time with us all is fast speeding by. Death is near. Eternity is hastening toward us. Not far away is the hour when we shall all stand before God in judgment. Be it so; be it so! Trusting then in Christ, and pleading then His finished work, wrought out for us on Calvary, we will also then be secure. Ours then will be the salvation promised to all whose trust is in Him.

Let our faith, then, now and always, I say, be firmly grounded in Christ: in His person, as a divine

as well as a human Savior, and in His work in our behalf, as a perfect and a "finished work." For the pardon of our sins, for the acceptance of our worship, for grace now, and for eternal life hereafter, let Christ be all our plea, His work all our ground of hope. For, "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." In Christ we are safe, now and forever. And, even in the last great day, we can behold, unterrified, all that shall then transpire, and, amid the wreck of nature and the crush of worlds, we will be able joyously to sing:

"Jesus! Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress:
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed
With joy do I lift up my head."

XII.

THE CENTRAL PLACE OF JESUS ON CALVARY.

Good Friday.

COLLECT.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast willed that Thy Son should bear for us the pains of the cross, that Thou mightest remove from us the power of the adversary: help us so to remember and give thanks for our Lord's Passion that we may obtain remission of sin and redemption from everlasting death; through the same, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

XII.

"On either side one, and Jesus in the midst."
JOHN, xix:18.

IT is a noteworthy fact that each of the four evangelists, in his record of the crucifixion of our Savior upon Calvary, is careful to state explicitly that the cross upon which He died was the central one of the three which were there erected. Two thieves were crucified with Him, but Jesus, they all carefully tell us, was crucified between the two. Matthew's statement is: "Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand and the other on the left." Mark says: "And with Him they crucify two thieves, the one on His right hand the other on His left." Luke's language is: "There they crucified Him and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left." And John writes: "Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst."

The cross, then, upon which Jesus there hung and died on Calvary was the middle, the central one of the three.

How came it so? Was it by chance only, perhaps? Hardly. Four inspired evangelists would scarcely, in so solemn a transaction as the death of Jesus, note so prominently a mere chance occurrence or incident. Was it malice possibly, the malice of His maglignant foes, who purposely thus placed His cross in between those of the two thieves, in order

to heap upon Him the deeper insult, and thus to brand Him, by the very prominence of His cross, as, in their judgment, the greatest criminal of them all? Possibly that does in part explain it. So far as man had aught to do with it we may assume that human malice did thus place the cross of Jesus purposely there, in that central prominence, "on either side of Him one, and Jesus in the midst." Still we find it difficult to believe that that is the full and only explanation of it. Another hand, we are forced to believe, than the hand of man thus placed that cross of Jesus there on Calvary so prominently "in the midst." God's hand, we instinctively feel, was also active in then and there fixing the relative location of that cross upon which His adorable Son, the God-man, our Savior, suffered and died.

And the design, or purpose of God, in thus providentially locating there on Calvary as the central cross, the cross upon which Jesus suffered and died, is not hard, at once, to surmise or discover. The location of that cross of Jesus there, "in the midst," or as the central cross, was, and is, an impressive object lesson, a visible gospel, addressed to the eye, declaring to all who look upon it what God's word, everywhere and constantly, declares, viz: that, in the whole economy of divine grace, in all the relations of God to man and of man to God, Jesus, the incarnate God-man, the crucified Christ, is the central object of the moral universe. Then, and now, and always, it declares that Jesus is morally and spiritually "in the midst." On either side of Him stand marshaled and related all divine purposes and revelations and economies and providences; and, related to Him, stand, also, all characters and possibilities

and hopes and destinies of all humanity in all ages.

"Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst."

I ask your attention to a consideration of two aspects of this central place of Jesus on Calvary, or of Jesus "in the midst," namely,

I. How Jesus, then, while He was there on the cross, was in the midst; and,

II. How He is now, also, still thus in the midst, and forever, also, will be.

"And Jesus in the midst." Let us, then, inquire:

I. In What Sense Was Jesus, While There on the Cross on Calvary, in the Midst?

He was thus "in the midst," first, when He there died on Calvary, Chronologically. He was then and there, as a dividing line, in between the Old and the New Testament economies or dispensations. On either side of Him then, chronologically, or in point of time, was one. His cross was in between the two great ages of the world's history, the past and the future. It stood at the historic junction point between the law and the gospel. It marked the dividing line between the old economy of prophecy and of long preparation for a Savior, and the new economy of fulfillment and of the final glorious realization, in His advent and presence among men, of all that had been thus promised. His sacrifice on the cross constituted the great Anti-type of all the typical sacrificial past: the point or moment in time when Old-Testament shadows became New-Testament substance; when emblems became facts, and when mere outlines developed into perfect and bodied forms; when the pale lamps of religious light, which

lighted men to heaven under the Old Dispensation, gave place to the rising of the full-orbed sun of divine truth and of God's revelation of Himself to man under the better New Dispensation. The veil of the temple was then rent in twain, thus declaring, as if spoken by a voice from the very Holy of Holies, that now, in that death of Jesus, the covenant of law had passed away; that now the long and wearisome ceremonials and washings and educational ordinances of the Mosaic ritual had all been abolished; and that now the shedding of blood of beast and of bird, had all, in that one great sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross, and in the shedding of that precious blood of the divine Lamb, been forever ended.

In this sense, then, was Jesus, when He there hung on His cross on Calvary, "in the midst": in the midst between two great divine economies, in the midst between two great epochs in the chronology both of heaven and earth, the one a past epoch, an epoch of types and sthadows and promises and hopes and eager longings for a Savior to come, the other an epoch of types and shadows and promises and hopes realization, of barriers broken down, and of the highway of salvation thrown wide open, a day of universal priesthood, in which, through Christ, every sinner can have immediate and divine access unto God.

But Jesus, while then on the cross on Calvary, was "in the midst," also, Mediatorially.

In this sense, as a reconciling Mediator between God and man, He was then and there especially "in the midst."

In some profound and mysterious sense, which we can not fully fathom, Jesus, when He there died upon the cross, died for man; died in man's stead; died

to make atonement for man's sins; died to save man from eternal death. In some substitutional or vicarious way, a way devised by the wisdom and the love of heaven as a plan for human redemption, Jesus, then, on the cross, was, as it were, in between the divine attribute of justice and the divine attribute of mercy. His cross was central. He was in the midst. God's "justice," demanding the death of the guilty, and God's "mercy," loving and longing to save them, were both then present there on Calvary: one on either side, and Jesus in the midst; and there and then, in some way, under the arms of that uplifted cross, in that myterious death of Jesus, they both, also, harmoniously met. As the psalmist so beautifully words it: "Mercy and truth then met together, righteousness and peace there and then kissed each other." Then, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." Then and there, Jesus, as our substitute, took our place, as guilty sinners under the curse of God's holy and broken law, suffered voluntarily the penalty of death due to us, drank the cup of the bitter wrath of God, made salvation a moral possibility, solved the great problem of the councils of the Godhead, opening a way whereby God, the holy and the just One, could yet be the justifier of those who had sinned against Him and who deserved to die. It was all then accomplished when Jesus, there on the cross, died for man. He was then vicariously "in the midst." On either side of Him was one: God and man, God the

holy One, and man the guilty one. On either side one: Justice and mercy, and Jesus in the midst.

"Lord, shall I strike the blow?" asks Justice.

"Hold, stay thy hand!" says Jesus.

"Speak, sinner, what sayest thou?

"Hast thou aught to plead why sentence should not pass?"

"Nothing, Lord," replies the sinner, "nothing I ask but mercy, mercy.

"Lord, my state is miserable, poor, desperate, guilty."

"I quite renounce myself, and flee from all my sin and guilt and death alone to Thee."

"Cease thy vain hopes," cries Justice; "my angry God has vowed insulted Law must be atoned by blood.

"Lord, shall I strike the blow?"

"Yes; strike," says Jesus, "but not on him, the guilty, but on Me,

"For him, let fall thy avenging sword:

"Here turn thy thirsty blade. Here in my side, let thy sharp wound be made.

"Cheer up, O sinner, thy life's redeemed by mine.

"My heart shall pierced be, and broke for thine."

"Oh, boundless grace, responds the sinner,

"Oh, love beyond degree, the offended dies to set the offender free."

Thus, in that atoning death of His, there upon the cross, was Jesus "in the midst": in between divine Justice and divine Mercy, satisfying every claim of Justice, making possible toward even the guiltiest the exercise of divine Mercy.

And hence, there, also, at that cross of Jesus is the place of meeting again between God and man.

There God and man are again reconciled: God's law honored, God's government vindicated, God's justice satisfied, God's holiness manifested, God's love and mercy exercised, and man, the guilty sinner, drawing near to God in sorrow for his sins and in faith in Christ, who there dies for his sins, is there again brought near to God, forgiven, restored, accepted, saved.

"On either side one": God on the one side, man on the other: God and man, before alienated, estranged, separated from each other by sin, but now, there under the sheltering arms of that central cross of Christ, brought together again in eternal love. The pierced hands of the crucified Jesus, the divine Mediator, the heavenly Days-man, are there laid, one upon each of them, and they there again are reconciled. God is brought near to man, and man is there brought near to God, and Jesus, as Mediator, is in the midst. There God again clasps the penitent and believing sinner to His heart of love, exclaiming: "Though I was angry with thee, yet now is My anger turned away." And, there man, looking up into the dying face of his uplifted Savior, with holy triumph, shouts: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died."

> "There Mercy reigns, and Justice too:
> In Christ harmoniously they meet:
> He paid to Justice all her due:
> And now He fills the Mercy-seat."

But, let us proceed to inquire:

II. In What Sense Jesus is Now Still "In the Midst," and Will, Also, Forever, Continue to be There.

The person and work and death of Jesus are still central in all that relates to man either for time or eternity. "On either side one, and Jesus in the midst," is, today, as then, eighteen centuries ago on Calvary, still the expression of a great existing fact.

It is wonderful how conspicuous and forceful and central a being this Jesus is in the world's experiences and history and destiny today. No secondary person is He: no subordinate position does He hold; but now, as ever, and now, indeed, more than ever, He is still Jesus "in the midst": the One lifted up before the eye and thought and study and wonder of all the world: the great, superhuman, divine Life-force of the ages, the Central One, both in the world and in the Church, both now and forever.

He is Jesus "in the midst":

(*a*) Of all the so-called civilization of our day: standing, in the civilizing power of the Gospel, in between society on the one hand and barbarism on the other.

The learning, the science, the art, the commerce, the literature, the legislation, the schools, the homes, the social life, the political institutions, the civil freedom, the security to property and person, all, in a word, which enters into and composes our modern nineteenth-century "civilization," and which distinguishes the Christian nations of the world today, from the semi-civilized and barbarous, is the outflow, the result, of the existence in the world of this Christ. His advent was the introduction of a new civilizing factor into the world's history. His teachings have molded the ages. His influence has inbreathed itself into all the relations and institutions of society. The cradle, the birth-place, the primal

source of the world's civilization today, on the one hand, over against paganism and barbarism, on the other, is that central cross of Jesus there on Calvary. It was Jesus "in the midst" then, and it is Jesus "in the midst" now: the divine Teacher and Benefactor, whose life and lessons have created for us and bestowed upon us all the social and intellectual and civil blessings which we enjoy. "On either side one, and Jesus in the midst."

Jesus, however, is now "in the midst" in a higher and yet better sense. He is "in the midst" especially:

(*b*) Of our great world of lost and perishing sinners, as an offered Savior in between sinful man and eternal death.

Thus was He already "in the midst" there on Calvary. His cross there stood in between the thieves that were crucified with Him; and He was there upon that cross as an offered Savior equally to them both. One of them accepted Him, and was saved; the other rejected Him, and was lost.

So are Jesus and His cross, as a source of salvation to man, still "in the midst"; in the midst of sin and sinners; in the midst of the guilty and condemned and dying; in their midst as a Savior, both offered to them and able and willing to save them. By His gospel, His spirit, His ministry, His Church, His grace, He is still "Jesus in the midst"; a Savior near to every perishing soul; standing between man as a sinner and the eternal death to which he is exposed, and ready and able to save him.

How differently, however, men treat this offer of salvation through Jesus. How differently those two malefactors acted toward Him. The one, convinced

of His Messiahship, repented, believed, accepted Him as a Savior; the other remained impenitent, unbelieving, Christ-rejecting, unsaved. It is still so. There are still two classes of sinners and Jesus still is in the midst. On the one side are those represented by the penitent thief; on the other those represented by the impenitent thief. Between them, equally near them, offered alike and on the same terms to all of them is Jesus; accepted by some they are saved, rejected by others they are lost.

What a critical thing such nearness to Jesus is! How much depends upon how He is then disposed of! "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." On one side or the other of that cross of Christ every human being, today, is. It is the dividing line of humanity. Jesus is "in the midst." My hearers, on which side of the cross are you? On the side of the penitent thief? The side of sorrow for sin, of faith, of pardon, of peace, of hope, of joy, of life? Blessed side! On the side of the impenitent thief? Oh, sad and wretched side of unpardoned sin and guilt and eternal death! O sinner, get yourself by penitence and faith to the right side of the cross. Jesus is near you. Jesus asks you to do so. He now calls you. He asks you, He pleads with you, to give yourself to Him, and to be saved by Him.

Jesus is "in the midst," I now remark, also:

(*c*) Of His organic Church, and of all the ordinances and means of grace which He has established for the upbuilding of His Church and for the conversion of the world.

He is both Founder and Head of the Church. It is called, in Scripture, "the Bride of Christ," "the Body

of Christ," "the Family or Household of Christ." Christ, it is written, loved the Church; purchased her with His blood; sanctified and cleansed her by His spirit; defends, guides, strengthens, helps her. "Lo, I am with you alway," is His promise to her, "even unto the end of the world." He is in her sanctuaries; they are His dwelling places. He is in her ministry; He calls, ordains, inspires them. He is in her sacraments; they are vehicles of His presence and grace. He is in her word; it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth on Him. He is in her prayers; His promise is: "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." He is in her worship; inspiring her to worship "in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in her heart to the Lord." He is in her conflicts and warfares, as a bulwark of defense, cheering her with the assurance that even the gates of hell shall not prevail against her; breaking down barriers before her, opening up highways of progress for her, giving her spiritual power over men's minds and hearts, enabling her to carry forward in triumph the banner of the cross over all the earth. "On either side one," the world and the Church, "and Jesus in the midst": in the midst of the conflict, in and with His people, the Captain of their salvation, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, leading them on to victory after victory until, at last, "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

And so, also, as Jesus is in the midst of His Church, as an organic whole, is He in the midst of all the experiences of His people individually. As Paul expresses it: "Christ is to each one of His saints

all in all." They are here in this life beset on every side with all manner of experiences, but Jesus is "in the midst" with them in them all. "Without are fightings, within are fears"; but in them all the Master is with them: in the midst of the loudest storm and in the gloom of the darkest night. Amid the shock of the fiercest battle, His voice ever rings out cheeringly upon them: "My grace is sufficient for thee"—"As thy day so shall thy strength be"—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Thus is Jesus with His people in the midst of all that can ever befall them: in the midst of temptation, to keep them; of danger, to defend them; of perplexity, to guide them; of want, to supply them; of soul hunger, to satisfy them; of darkness, to enlighten them; of discouragement, to cheer them; of sorrow, to confort them; of death, to support them; of the grave, to raise them; of the judgment throne of God, to confess and save them. Always, in every experience, in every want and trial and joy and sorrow and duty and danger, in life or in death, of His people, Jesus is with them. "On either side one," but always Jesus is in the midst.

"Always with us, always with us,
Words of cheer, and words of love,
Thus the risen Savior whispers
From His dwelling place above.

With us when the storm is sweeping
O'er our pathway dark and drear:
Waking hope within our bosoms,
Stilling every anxious fear.

With us in the lonely valley,
When we cross the chilling stream;
Lighting up the steps to glory
With salvation's radiant beam."

(*d*) Jesus, I must yet add, will, also, be eternally "in the midst."

He will be eternally in the midst of all the worship and glory of heaven. Pre-eminently will Jesus there be "in the midst": His throne the highest, His glory the brightest, His scepter the supremest, His name the greatest. He is there "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne." Before Him every crown is there cast, every knee is bent, every lip is vocal with praise. There angels worship Him; and archangels adore Him; and Seraphim and Cherubim veil their faces before Him. There all the redeemed saints from earth, a countless multitude, clothed in white robes, and having palms in their hands, bow continually before Him, and cease not, night and day, to say: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

Thus central in glory will be the throne of Jesus, as once on Calvary central was His cross. And, as He was once " in the midst," as an atoning sacrifice for sin upon the accursed tree, so will He, also, forever, as the exalted mediatorial King, and as the Uplifted Object of the worship of all heaven, be in the midst there in the life to come. And, thus, eternally will it then still there be true, "on either side one": angels and saints, and Jesus as their glorious King, Redeemer, God, "in the midst."

And now, Christian friends, in this subject which has, today, engaged our attention, we have, let me, in conclusion, say, the vital truth of our whole Christian system, the crucial test of all orthodoxy, the one sole ground of salvation to every individual soul. It is all determined by what we think and do with

Christ, what we believe and teach concerning Him, what our personal relations are to Him as a personal Savior, where we put Him, relatively, in the circle of our Christian faith and hope and love, whether out in the circumference or in the living center: all depends, I say, on that. The Church that makes Jsus Christ central; the creed that makes Christ central; the theology that makes Christ central, is always Christian and soundly othodox. And the soul that always exalts Christ, that gives Him the central, the supreme, the highest place in its faith and trust and love as its Savior, is always a saved soul. It is saved, because it has, by faith, put itself, through faith in Christ, into the very heart of God, into the very seat and center of all God's pledged love and power for its salvation. It can not be lost. It is already saved. It is in Christ. How vital, then, to one of us, is the question: What is my personal relation to Christ? On which side of His cross do I stand? Where have I put Him? What disposition have I made of Him, as a divinely-offered sacrifice? Is He in the midst of my hopes and trust as my divine "all in all"? Is He in the center, as my Savior, in between me and sin and guilt and death and hell? In between me and God and heaven and eternal salvation, as the way, the truth, and the life, my Prophet, my Priest, my Lord?

Blessed Lord! help us all, by Thy grace, thus to put Thee and Thy cross in the very center of our souls, in the innermost chamber of our best love and faith and worship and service, for time and for eternity.

XIII.

A RISEN SAVIOR OUR GROUND OF JOY.

Easter.

COLLECT.

O God, who didst enlighten this most holy night with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: preserve in all Thy people the spirit of adoption which Thou hast given, so that renewed in body and soul they may perform unto Thee a pure service; through the same, our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

XIII.

"Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."
JOHN, XX:20.

ONE can scarcely conceive how great must have been the change, or the transition of feeling, experienced by the disciples of Jesus, on the first Easter Lord's Day, when once they were assured of the precious fact that He was, indeed, risen from the dead, and that He was again alive and with them as of old. His death, on the Friday before, had filled them with unutterable depression and sorrow. It was contrary to all their fondest expectations: the frustration of all their most ardent hopes and most cherished desires. It scattered them as sheep having no shepherd, fulfilling what was declared, long previous, by the prophet: "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered abroad." It was, as we know, the utter extinction of their hopes concerning Him as the Promised Messiah, and seemed to them, no doubt, the final and complete expulsion from the earth of a new religion which they had espoused, and for which they had given up their earthly all.

Thus bitterly disappointed by the death of Jesus, how precious to them, I repeat, must have been the tidings, on that first Easter morning, that He had risen from the dead, and how glad they must have been when, at last, upon the evening of the day of His resurrection, He again appeared among them,

and when, with their own eyes, they again saw Him, and, with their own hands, they again touched and handled Him. In the words of our text: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." They were glad because Friday, "Sad Friday," with all its darkness and grief and tears, was then all forgotten and gone; and then, Easter, with all the comfort and light and revived hope and full assurance of the Redeemer's resurrection, had burst upon them, and now shone in holy splendor around them. On such a day, and over such an event as that, well might they, indeed, thus be glad and rejoice. For if Jesus, their Master, had not risen, if the grave had continued to hold Him, how complete would their disappointment and loss have been, both for this life and for the life to come!

But, to us, as disciples of Christ, no less than to those disciples then, should the fact of His resurrection be a source of joy. That empty sepulchre of the risen Lord means as much to us at it meant to them. To us that fact, announced by the angels: "The Lord is risen; He is not here; Come and see the place where He lay;" is laden with as much of infinite blessings as it was to them. Of us, therefore, as well as of them, it should today be said: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

As our Easter theme, let us, then, today, meditate upon this thought: "A Risen Jesus our Ground of Joy." Or, in other words, let us ask: "Why should the fact of the resurrection of our Lord fill us, His disciples, today, with holy joy?"

In answer to this question, I reply:

I. That the Resurrection of Our Lord Should, Today, Fill Us With Holy Joy, Because In It We Have a Most Impressive Display of His Divine Power, and a Most Signal Victory Over All His Foes.

Everything that human malice and power and skill could possibly do to destroy the existence of Jesus, and, with His destruction, to erase Christianity from the earth, had, also, then been done. He had been arrested, condemned, crucified, dead, buried. The place of His burial was a new-made grave hewn in a solid rock. A heavy stone sealed up its mouth. A body of Roman soldiers stood as guards before it. The disciples, filled with terror, had all been scattered. Christianity seemed, indeed, utterly extinguished. The name of "Jesus" seemed to be finally uprooted and banished from the earth. The triumph of the enemies of Jesus seemed, at last, to be complete; and there, now, in that rocky tomb, in silence, cold in death, lay His precious form, and every vestige of the new religion which He had preached seemed now to be there buried with Him forever out of sight. Perfect, I repeat, seemed the triumph of His foes.

But it was, after all, only an apparent triumph. It was all only a seeming victory. That "Jesus," whom they supposed Dead, still lived. Within His bosom, apparently lifeless, there still throbbed the resistless power of divinity. Within His hand, there folded so quietly, as though stiff with the palsy of death, there still slumbered the might of Omnipotence. And lo, when once the moment beforehand predicted had arrived, despite all that combined op-

position of His foes, He came triumphantly forth. The sepulchre, though built of massive rock, could not retain Him. Those Roman soldiers, though many and brave, could not prevent Him. The Scribes and Pharisees, the elders and high priests, the people and their rulers, Pilate and Herod, though all had united to destroy Him, single-handed, were now all defeated, and, prostrating them all before Him, He came victoriously forth from the tomb in which they had barred Him.

Thus vain, in that hour of His resurrection, was the opposition of all His foes. Great, mighty, numerous and determined as were all their efforts, they yet all then availed them nothing. Jesus then was victor over them all.

> "Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
> Christ then burst the gates of hell.
> Death in vain forbade His rise;
> Christ then opened Paradise."

In all this, as disciples of Jesus, like those first disciples of His, we, today, surely have cause for rejoicing. For in it all we see how great a Savior we have, how truly divine He is, how irresistible His power. We see, therefore, also, how safely and fully we may commit ourselves to Him, how able He is to help and defend us, how easily He can deliver and save us, both in body and soul, both in time and in eternity. Great, almighty, O Christian, is your risen Lord. His rising from the dead displays His omnipotence, assures you of His deity, tells you that, with Him as your Defence, you are ever beyond even the shadow of harm.

Besides: that resurrection of Christ, thus display-

ing His divine power, gives assurance of abiding safety, also, in all time, to His Church. That victory over His enemies then, assures us that thus shall He always triumph over His enemies. It guarantees His promise concerning His Church: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her"; no weapon formed against her shall prosper; no combination of opposing forces, no league of possible enemies shall ever be able to overthrow her; but, in spite of all the combined malice and rage of all her foes, He will ever give her the victory, and cause her triumphantly to come forth out of all her imprisoning sepulchres, as He, triumphantly, then, on that Easter morn, came forth from His.

In view, then, of this impressive exhibition of the irresistible might of our Savior over all His foes, and of the assurance which it gives us of His ability to protect His people and Church, down to the end of time, against all possible opposition and agencies arising against them, what joy, on this Easter morning, should not fill our hearts! What comfort should we not feel! Because of what His resurrection thus reveals, like the first disciples, how glad we should, today, be, as we behold our risen Lord: His grave empty, His foes all discomfited and overthrown, and He, as Conqueror, rising and going forth from His grave upon His triumphant march of spiritual victory over all the earth.

The resurrection of Jesus is, however, to us a ground of joy or gladness, also, I now remark,

II. Because It Confirms, Beyond All Possibility of Doubt, Our Faith That He Was, Indeed, As He Claimed, the Incarnate God.

Many other evidences of His divinity had already been given. The minute fulfillment, for example, in Him and in Him only, of numerous prophecies; the circumstances connected with His birth; the sublimity and superiority of His religious teachings; the spotless holiness of His life; the frequent and various miracles which He wrought; the character of the religion which He established; the supernatural occurrences connected with His death, namely, the opening graves, the rending rocks, the quaking earth, the eclipsed sun: all these attest His superhuman, His divine character. All these certified that He was, indeed, as He claimed, "truly the Son of God."

But still there was one more evidence needed to certify His claims beyond all possibility of doubt, and to authenticate His mission so fully that not a shadow even of uncertainty was His resurrection: the evidence of His own deserted and empty tomb. After all, as a final proof of His divinity, everything depended upon that. For upon that He had Himself staked the truth of His claims. By His resurrection from the dead He had Himself said He would show His divine power over death. By His coming forth from the grave, men, He had declared, should see and know that He, indeed, was God. He said He would arise. And now, as He said, He did also arise. But if, as He predicted, He thus arose, then also was He what He claimed to be, viz: the Son of God, the Messiah and Savior of the world. His resurrection, in a word, was the seal, the divine proof of His divinity.

And this, surely, is cause to us, as Christians, of joy. To know that our Savior is a divine Savior,

infinite in all the attributes of His nature, that He is Himself truly God, this, I say, is ground to us, as Christians, for most heartfelt rejoicing.

Assured, then, as we today are by the empty sepulchre of our risen Lord, that He is, indeed, true God, "Emmanuel: God with us," "God manifest in the flesh," learning, I say, today, anew, this precious lesson, unutterable joy should fill our hearts. Of us, and of all who are Christians, upon this Easter Day commemorating His resurrection, it may and ought to be true: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw their Lord."

The resurrection of Jesus is a ground, however, also, for Christian joy, I remark again,

III. Because It Proves God's Acceptance of His Sufferings and Death As An Atonement For Our Sins.

The death of Jesus was a propitiatory offering, made to God in order to redeem and save us. The Scriptures declare that "He died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"; that "He was the Propitiation for our sins." But how do we know that His offering was accepted of God? We know it, I answer, by His resurrection. The empty tomb is our evidence. That shows that the offering which He made for us on the cross was accepted by God, that God was well pleased with it, that the price of our redemption which He then paid was sufficient, and that now this Jesus, by virtue of this atonement, is "able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." All this does it show. The resurrection of Jesus declares God's acceptance

of His atoning work in our behalf. It is God's seal of approbation, assuring us, as the apostle, writing to the Romans, expresses it, that "He was not only delivered to death for our offenses, but that He was also raised again from the dead for our justification."

Here, then, Christian friends, in this resurrection of our Savior, there is, to us, another unspeakably precious ground of joy. Jesus, our Savior, is risen from the dead. God Himself thus raised Him up. The sacrifice of the cross, which He made for us, is, then, accepted by God. That empty grave is the divine testimony to it all. Our debt to God, is assures us, is all paid. The resurrection of Christ is the evidence, the seal, the pledge that His atoning work was a finished and accepted work.

Today, then, upon this glad Easter Day, standing by the side of our risen Redeemer's empty sepulchre, and having thus, in His resurrection, the evidence of God's acceptance of all His finished work in our behalf, let us rejoice. Let our hearts and lips and souls all be glad. Like the disciples of old, as we, today, by faith see our risen Lord, let us rejoice. And, assured by His resurrection, that not only is He accepted, but that, in Him, we, also, are accepted and made heirs of salvation, let us, in the apostle's triumphant language, today, say: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is it that condemneth? It is Christ that died. Yea, rather, that is risen again." Or, with another apostle, let us exclaim: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

The resurrection of Jesus is, however, also to us, who are Christians, a ground of unspeakable joy. I now remark, finally,

IV. Because it is Both a Picture and a Pledge of Our Own Future and Glorious Resurrection.

"Now," says Paul, "is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." Notice that expression: "Christ is become the first-fruits of them that slept." He is the "first-fruits." The resurrection of Christ from the dead, is the meaning, is the beginning of a work that shall only end when once the body of every child of God has been raised from its sleeping-place and brought home to glory. It means that Christ leads a great procession of risen and glorified bodies: that He sweeps in through the Gates of Paradise, in His resurrection body, as a divine conqueror, as the leader and herald of the countless millions of His saints, who also shall rise, in glorified bodies like unto His, and reign with Him forever.

What a blessed fact that is! Every sleeping disciple of Christ will rise. Every child of God will be brought home. The dust of his body may be in the sea, or on the mountain, or in the churchyard; it matters not where; wherever it is, it is all safe; and will, at last, be gathered. All who sleep in Jesus will also rise in Jesus. He is the "first-fruits": the first one, in the long procession of risen and glorified ones.

Lay hold joyously, today, followers and disciples of this risen Jesus, of this precious truth of your own certain and glorious resurrection. Jesus, your divine

head, arose triumphantly from the tomb. He conquered death. He burst the bars of the rocky sepulchre. He came forth clothed with life and light and immortality. And so, also, O blessed assurance! shall we arise. Our graves, when once we sleep in them, shall not always retain our dust. But, as Jesus rose, so also shall we arise. As His grave opened, so also shall ours open. As His Easter Morning broke upon the earth, so also shall ours. And as He came forth majestically and gloriously from His tomb, so shall we come forth from ours: our bodies fashioned like unto His glorious body, the corruptible having put on incorruption, and the mortal, immortality, risen from the dead, caught up, glorified, privileged to be forever with the Lord.

This is the glory which, in the resurrection, awaits all the saints of Christ. This is the hope, the assurance, the exalted destiny of all who fall asleep in Jesus. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

What a source of joy is this! How our hearts should gladden and thrill with happiness under this blessed resurrection hope; and with what rapture of soul should we all, who are Christians, sing our Easter-song, saying:

> "Christ, the Lord, has risen today,
> Sons of men and angels say,
> Raise your joys and triumphs high;
> Sing, ye heavens, and earth, reply."

And what joy and hope does not this blessed Easter truth, that all sleep in Christ, Christ shall thus awake and bring out of their tombs in His own

glorious image, furnish, also, to all of us who weep for loved ones who have fallen asleep in Christ. And how many such there are! How we all have laid some such away! With what aching hearts we parted with them! And how sacred to us their places of rest! We do not mourn as do those who have no hope. For we, as believers in Christ, have hope; we have more than hope; we have assurance. We know in whom they believed; and we know also in whom we believe. Both they and we are one in Christ. In Him they now sleep. In Him we, too, shall sleep. In Him, also, therefore, both we and they shall, together, at last arise. These dear ones, sleeping now in Christ, Christ also, in the Resurrection Morning, will wake from their sleep. They shall come forth again from those graves where we have laid them, changed, glorified, but yet the same; the same features, the same voice, the same unchanged look of love, the same precious ones that they were of old, in all respects. And then they again shall be ours, and ours shall they then be forever.

In view of all this, how much there is in Easter to fill our hearts with holy and rapturous Christian joy. Of us, as of the disciples of old, on that first Easter Day, how true it ought to be: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." The grave of our risen Lord is empty. Dead, He again lives. Crucified on Good Friday, He is risen on Easter. Ours, therefore, is a victorious, glorified, Almighty Savior, Lord both of life and of death, having in His Omnipotent hand the keys both of death and of hell: One, therefore, in whom we can safely trust ourselves both in life and in death. Doing so, in life He

will be our support, our guide, our comfort, our help; and in death He will close our eyes in holy peace, will watch over our sleeping dust, and, in the morning of the resurrection, in His own glorified image, will again bring us forth, clothed with immortality, to enjoy Him forever. As another has beautifully said: "Since the glad announcement, 'He is not here, but is risen,' out of every believer's grave there now grows an Easter lily, and in every tomb there now sits an angel." The beautiful German hymn of Gellert expresses it all:

"Jesus lives, and so shall I;
Death, thy sting is gone forever;
He who deigned for me to die,
Lives, the bands of death to sunder:
He shall raise me with the just,
Jesus is my hope and trust."

Christ is risen, and so shall we, therefore, and all who sleep in Him, also arise. Christ triumphed over death, and now lives, and so shall we, therefore, also triumph and live. Thanks be unto God for this glorious Resurrection Hope!

XIV.

CHRIST RISEN, YET NOT ASCENDED.

Easter.

COLLECT.

Almighty God, who, through Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: we humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

XIV.

"To whom, also, He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Acts, i:3.

THE history or biography of our Savior, while He was here upon earth, easily divides itself into several different and well-defined periods.

From His advent, for example, to His baptism, or His entrance upon His public ministry, covering the lapse of about thirty years, constitutes the first, and by far, the longest of these periods: a period of silent obscurity, or normal personal development, and of well-rounded and entire preparation for His Messianic work.

From this entrance upon His ministry, or beginning of His official work, to the close of it, or down to the time of His tragic death upon the cross, covering a stretch of about three years, constitutes the second of these periods: or the period of action, the period in which, with consuming zeal, He was "about His Father's business," preaching, declaring His Messiahship, working miracles, calling and training apostles, exposing and rebuking existing sins, doing good in all possible ways to all classes of men, everywhere unfolding and declaring the great divine truths and principles of the kingdom of God which He had come to establish.

A distinct, brief, third period, however, now follows: namely, from His death until His resurrection, from Good Friday until Easter; from the moment when, on the cross, He exclaimed: "It is finished—Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," until the hour when, at His empty sepulchre, the angels said to the astonished women: "He is not here, but is risen," the period of His rest in the grave, symbol of our bodily sleep in our graves when once our life-work is ended, and pledge of our resurrection when once, at His summons, and in His image, we also shall again awake and arise.

But there is now yet a fourth period in the earth-life of our Savior, namely, from His resurrection until His ascension, or final return again to His Father—a period of "forty days"—the period which may be designated as the confirming period of His earth-work, in which He confirmed His disciples in the assurance of His resurrection, in the fact of His Messiahship, in the truths of His gospel, in the knowledge of all that was necessary to them, after His departure, as His witnesses, and as the preachers and founders of His Church in the world.

It is to this fourth, or last period of our Savior's life here upon earth, that our text has reference. With allusion to his Gospel, previously written, Luke, the author of this book of "The Acts of the Apostles," here says: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after that He, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen." And then, in the words of our text, he adds: "To whom, also, He showed Himself alive

after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

In this language of Luke there is the statement of a series of most important facts: namely, that our Savior, after His resurrection from the grave, did not immediately ascend into heaven but remained still upon earth during forty days; that, during these forty days, He frequently and most clearly and convincingly showed Himself to His apostles and disciples, being seen and handled by them, eating with them and speaking to them; and that, in this post-resurrection period of these forty days before His ascension, in these repeated interviews which He had with them, He gave to His apostles many "commandments," and much instruction, concerning "The Church," or "The kingdom of God," here upon earth, which, in its germinal truths and principles, He had planted, and which they now, after His ascension, and after the descent of the Holy Spirit, were in its polity and external organization, and by word and sacrament, to disseminate and establish in all the world.

Upon this fourth period of our Savior's earth-life, and with these facts connected with it, which Luke here thus gives us, let us now dwell awhile. There is material here for some very profitable and very precious thought.

I. The First Thing That Impresses Us In Our Consideration of This Post-Resurrection Period of Our Savior's Stay Upon Earth, Is the Evident Fact That, Whilst His Risen Body Was Essentially, or In Its Distinctive Individuality and Identity, the

Same Body Which the Disciples Had Known as His Before Death and Resurrection, and in Which He Had Lived and Died, It Was Yet, In Many Respects, Also a Very Different, or a Greatly Changed Body.

What precisely the nature of His resurrection body was, what exactly its "form," or "appearance," or mode of subsistence, or method of conveying itself from place to place, and many other things concerning it, were, we do not know. But one thing is very clear: a great change had been wrought in it of some kind. It was clearly the same body which before His death was His; but yet somehow it was just as clearly a very different body; identical and yet changed; visible yet not grossly material; human and personal, so as to be recognizable by those to whom He appeared as He whom they had known before; and yet now, in some mysterious way, above the wants, the limitations, the physical restrictions, the material conditions, to which in His complete human humiliation, He was subject before He thus died and arose.

We find, for example, that while "He ate with His disciples, "He evidently did not eat to satisfy personal bodily hunger, or because He, at all, in His resurrection body needed food any longer to sustain it; but only in order, by thus eating with and before His disciples, to assure them that He actually and really was risen.

We find, also, that while, during these forty days, He repeatedly appeared to the disciples, He did not, as before His death, live with them. He only occasionally came to them. He appeared to them, and

then disappeared. And the character of His "appearances" to them was singular. There was something sudden, supernatural, superhuman, miraculous, connected with them: something wholly different from His appearances and intercourse with them before His death.

We read, for example, that, "when the doors were shut for fear of the Jews," where the disciples were assembled, on the evening of the day of His resurrection, "Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them: Peace be unto you." He came through the bolted and unopened door; came evidently unhindered by physical obstructions; came no longer subject to His former material conditions and limitations; came as an "apparition"; came suddenly; spoke to them, and they recognized Him, and knew that it was He;—and yet so wondrously other, and changed, and above what once He was. And then we read, also, that, having thus strangely appeared to them, He just as strangely, suddenly, disappeared. After His long interview with the two disciples, on the way to Emmaus, it is written: "and He vanished out of their sight."

He could, also, when He wished, appear in unrecognized and unknown forms and appearances. Mary thought Him the gardener. The disciples, on the way to Emmaus, until almost the close of their walk with Him, thought Him a stranger in Jerusalem. At the sea of Tiberias, only after the miraculous draught of fish, did the disciples know Him. John writes: "But, when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus."

And then His ability, suddenly, and invisibly, and

instantaneously to convey Himself from one place to another, in His resurrection body, was wonderful. He bade His disciples, for example, meet Him in Galilee. But He did not travel with them there; nor is there any intimation of His going there, as men ordinarily go from place to place. On the contrary, in some strange, unknown, supernatural way, unseen by any one, He seems to have transported Himself thither, and was there beforehand to meet them.

There was something, also, in the risen or resurrection body of Christ, which, in all His appearances to them, awed His disciples, and even filled them with terror and fear. And, even when He spoke most tenderly to them, and sought to dispel their fears, and encouraged them to confidence and holy intimacy with Him, they still could not but feel that He was, in some way, different, and greatly changed from what He before was, and that their relations to Him were also now somehow changed. His humanity was now somehow glorified. His divinity now shone out more clearly before them. When He appeared to them at the Sea of Tiberias, "None of them," we read, "durst ask Him: Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord." In His first interview with them, on the evening of the day of His resurrection, "they were," we read, "terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." When He met them in Galilee, "they came," we read, "and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him."

From all these considerations we clearly see, then, that the resurrection body of Christ, whilst still the body in which He had lived, and been known before His death, in which He had been crucified and buried, was yet, in many respects, a greatly changed

body. There was identity, but also transformation; sameness, but dissimilarity; the natural, but also the supernatural; the material, but the material transfigured and permeated by the spiritual and divine; a body, but a body no longer conditioned by mere physical laws, and fitted only to surroundings of time and sense, but a body which, in the grave and resurrection, had undergone a wondrous change, had been uplifted into a new, higher, unearthly, superhuman plane and order of corporeal being, and was now that new body in which, as God-man, at the end of forty days, He should take up our redeemed humanity with Him into the skies, and in which He will there eternally declare Himself in His mediatorial dignity and glory.

But why speak, at such length, of this nature of the Savior's resurrection body? Because, I answer, we all, as His disciples, would know all of our Savior which it is possible for us to know. But also for another, and more personal reason. That resurrection body of Christ is the figure and foreshadowing to us of what our resurrection bodies shall be. It reveals to us how we shall rise, and with what bodies we shall come from our graves. "If we believe," says Paul, "that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." And again he says: "Who shall change our vile body," or according to the Revised Version, "who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory," or "like unto His glorious body"?

What an expression that is! "Like unto His glorious body": just like that wondrous resurrection body of Christ, in which, during those forty post-

resurrection days, He appeared to the disciples, and in which He then ascended to heaven. Was His raised body really the same body which had been buried? So shall our resurrection bodies be none other than our own present bodies, a real "resurrection," not a "creation." Was His body easily recognized and known by those who before had known Him? So shall ours be. There will be continued personality and individuality, and we shall know and greet each other when we rise on the resurrection morning, with clear assurance of each one's identity. Was His body no longer subject to former physical wants, such as food and drink and sleep? Neither shall ours be. "They shall," we read, "hunger no more, neither thirst any more." Was His resurrection body endued with new and supernatural capacities and powers, and fitted to new conditions and activities? So, also, shall ours be. "It is sown a natural body, but it is raised," says the apostle, "a spiritual body." Was His body freed from all its previous "infirmities," such as weariness, sickness, decay, suffering? So ours, also, shall be. "Neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain," says John. Was His body no longer mortal, or subject to death? Neither shall ours be. "And there shall be no more death" is the divine promise. "This mortal shall put on immortality." And was His a resplendent, a glorious body? So shall ours also be. The promise is specific: "Our body shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body." "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Blessed hope! Blessed assurance! Blessed and glorious resurrection body of Jesus! Blessed resurrection bodies of all His saints, who sleep in Him!

They shall be like Him. The harvest will be as the first-fruits. Our bodies, O Christian, when they arise from the grave, will be, somewhat at least, as our Savior's body when He arose, and as His body in heaven now is.

> "My flesh shall slumber in the grave,
> Till the last trumpet's joyful sound;
> Then burst the chains with sweet surprise,
> And in my Savior's image rise."

There is now, however, a second fact which the consideration of the scriptural record of these forty days most convicingly teaches, namely,

II. The Absolute Certainty of Our Savior's Resurrection.

Thirteen different "appearances" of our Savior, after His resurrection, are recorded in the New Testament. To Mary Magdalene alone; to the women returning from the sepulchre; to Simon Peter alone; to the two disciples going to Emmaus; to the apostles at Jerusalem when Thomas was not present; to the apostles at Jerusalem, a week later, when Thomas was present; to the seven apostles when fishing at the sea of Galilee; to the eleven apostles on a mountain in Galilee; to about five hundred brethren or disciples at once, probably in Galilee; to Paul also; and to Stephen; and to John in his apocalyptic vision, on the Island of Patmos, after His ascension: to all these did Jesus, after His resurrection, appear. By all these was He seen. Not in one place only, but in many places; not to a few witnesses only, but to many; not under one set of

circumstances only, but under the most varied and dissimilar circumstances. Three times, we are told, His disciples touched Him. Twice, we read, He ate with them. Often He spoke to them. During forty days, at intervals, He was with them, and, as Luke here in our text tells us, "by many infallible proofs," *sure tokens,* evidences which left no possible room any longer for doubt, "He showed Himself alive after His passion."

And thus was the fact of His resurrection established, and made certain to them, beyond all possibility of doubt. Whatever doubt concerning it any of them may have had was all fully removed by the evidence given them. The proof was irresistible. They could no longer disbelieve. They knew that He was risen. It was to them an incontrovertible fact. And, henceforth, at every personal sacrifice, at cost even of life itself, they gave themselves up to the one work of declaring this fact, witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus, as the one great crowning credential of His Messiahship, and as the central and foundation truth of the entire temple of Christianity.

And they did well to make it thus, in all their teaching, the important and vital fact in connection with Christianity that they did. For it is, indeed, the very cornerstone of our Christian faith. "If Christ be not risen," as St. Paul puts it, "then is our preaching vain, and then is your faith also vain." Then our whole Christian structure falls; all our hope of salvation then, at once, perishes; then, from turret to foundation, by a single stroke, the entire temple of Christianity goes down into the dust. For a dead Chirst, an unrisen Christ, a Christ who said that, upon the third day after His death, He would

arise, and staked the validity of His claims as the Son of God and Savior of the world upon the resurrection which He thus had predicted, and then did not arise, such a Christ would be a false Christ, such a Savior would be no Savior. Then, by His own test of reality, and by His own criterion and proof of His pretensions, it would be manifest that He was not the Son of God, not the promised Messiah, and that no soul could safely trust itself to Him for salvation.

But the fact of the resurrection of Christ is, by the evidence in the case, established beyond the least room for reasonable doubt. No fact in all history rests upon clearer, more connected, solid and convincing proof than does this fact of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from His sleep of death in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea. As He foretold, He did arise. His sepulchre indeed is empty. He showed Himself alive after His passion, to many witnesses, by many infallible signs. That Christ arose is not then merely a hope, a speculation, a probability, but it is, beyond all doubt, a fact, the most certain of all certainties.

> "Our Lord has risen from the dead:
> Our Jesus has gone up on high:
> The powers of hell are captive led
> Dragged to the portals of the sky."

Our faith, therefore, in Him as our Savior, is a sure and well-grounded faith. For ours is a risen, living, divine Savior. His resurrection proves Him to be all this. That empty sepulchre of His assures us that our hopes, our faith, are indeed securely based: that He is indeed truly victor over death and hell, the divine Son of God, the world's predicted

Christ, "able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God through Him."

And, in order thus to give such clear and undoubted proof of His resurrection, was manifestly the chief reason why, after His resurrection, He tarried thus forty days upon earth, and did not immediately, when He came from the tomb, ascend to His Father. The fact of His resurrection must be made sure. It could only be made certain and sure by His thus remaining; repeatedly appearing to His disciples; communing with them; eating with them; allowing them to touch and handle Him, and then, at the expiration of forty days, in the presence and sight of many of them, from Mount Olivet, ascend before them slowly, visibly, upward to heaven.

To give still further instruction to His disciples, instruction necessary to the founding of the Church and the spread of the Gospel, for which, perhaps, they were not before prepared, was also, no doubt, a reason why He thus tarried during those forty days after His resurrection. He had yet many things to say to them before leaving them. "Speaking," says our text, "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." What He thus taught them concerning His kingdom or church, we are not definitely told. But we may, from the teachings of the apostles, and from their actions or practices, in connection with the planting and government of the churches, infer what, in substance, it was. For we may safely assume that the apostles, both in doctrine and church polity, taught and practiced what Christ, while yet with them, bade them teach and practice. Hence, all such matters as the ordination of ministers, the change of the sacred day of the week from the sev-

enth to the first day of the week, household or infant baptism, the appointment of deacons and deaconesses in the churches, the matter of church organization and government, the essential doctrines of Christianity which they were to preach and demand from all who should assume the Christian name: all these, and yet other matters, we may assume, Jesus during these forty days, instructed His disciples in, thus didactically, as it were, rounding out and completing His work, leaving them ignorant of nothing necessary for them to know in order to establish and perpetuate His church upon earth.

How thankful we should be in view of all that was thus accomplished by our Savior, during these forty days, both in the way of evidence that He was, indeed, risen, and in the way, also, of needed final instruction, that He did thus remain! How much would evidently have been lost if He had immediately ascended after His resurrection!

Especially let us rejoice in His having thus remained forty days, in view of the clear evidence of His resurrection, which, by His thus remaining, is given us. We are now sure of His resurrection. The proof is abundant and convicing. The Lord is risen indeed. We know that He is risen. And this is an infinitely valuable and precious fact. Knowing, as we do, that He is risen, we know, also, that He was all that He claimed to be: the Messiah, the Son of God, the one only Savior of the world. We know, also, that our faith in Him will be gloriously realized; that as He arose, we shall arise; as He ascended, we shall ascend; as He now lives, we shall live. "Where I am," He says, "there shall ye also be." "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Rejoice, then, O Christian, in this assurance given thee by thy risen Lord. Rest in this blessed hope of the resurrection through Him who was Himself once dead, but is now alive again, and has the keys of hell and death.

To this resurection of Jesus, our divine Lord, we owe all our hopes of our resurrection. With this assurance of His having risen from the dead, we can stand by the graves of our loved ones whom we have laid away in Him, and we can joyfully say: "They sleep in Christ; they shall also arise in Christ; as His grave was empty, theirs also shall be empty." "Auf Wiedersehen"—we shall, in their bodies, see them again.

And with such bright hopes and blessed assurances, may we also look forward to our own rest, at last, in the grave. It will be only a sleep. We shall awake again in the morning. We shall arise, our bodies clothed in the immortal glory of our risen Lord Himself. "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But, thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

XV.

THE HOME-GOING REDEEMER.

Ascension Day.

COLLECT.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

XV.

"And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

LUKE, xxiv:50, 51.

THE incarnation of Christ dates the beginning of His redemptive work here upon earth: His ascension into heaven dates the end or completion of it. Between these two conspicuous events transpired the whole great mediatorial mission of salvation for the accomplishment of which He came into our lost world: His participation in all our human experiences, His endurance of Satanic temptations, His holy and perfect obedience to God's law, His spotless example of piety both toward God and man for our imitation, His revelation and teaching of God's will, His exhibition of God's infinite love and desire to save us, His unfolding of God's way of saving us through faith in Him as the divine Son of God, His miracles, His establishment of His church in the calling and commissioning of His apostles, His atoning death on Calvary, His burial in the grave, His triumphant resurrection: all these events in His earth-life occurred between these two significant dates, the date of His coming from the Father, and the date when His life-work here was finished, of His going back again to His Father.

The first of these events the Church joyously

celebrates in her Christmas festival. The second she celebrates today, in her festival observance of Ascension.

May our observance of this day of our divine Lord's ascension prove a real spiritual Ascension Day to our souls, and prepare us all for a final glorious ascension into the same world of holiness and bliss into which He then entered.

In considering the ascension of our Savior, let us notice:

I. The Reality of the Occurrence.

It has been objected to the reality of the ascension that it is only mentioned by two out of the four evangelists, viz: Mark and Luke, and these were neither apostles nor eye-witnesses of the fact which they relate. Matthew and John, who are represented as present, are silent on this subject. And it has been further urged that this event is not dwelt upon by any of the other writers of the New Testament. (*Gloag.*)

All this is true; and this comparative silence of the sacred writers concerning an incident of such importance in the life of our Savior does, it must be confessed, appear strange. And yet there is not as much scriptural silence upon the ascension of our Savior as this naked statement, just made, implies.

It is an event foretold and typified already in the Old Testament Scriptures. In the 110th Psalm, God is represented as calling the Messiah up to His right hand: "The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." And again, in the 68th Psalm, David says of

Christ: "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, Thou hast received gifts for men." Moses, ascending Mount Sinai, to receive the Law, may be considered as a type of Christ ascending into heaven to receive spiritual blessings for men. Elijah, also taken up into heaven, and imparting, in his ascension, a double portion of his spirit to his successor, was, probably, typical of Christ ascending into heaven and imparting the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Ghost upon His infant church. And so the High Priest, also, on the great day of Atonement, going up from the congregation of Israel into the Holy of Holies, which figured heaven, beautifully foreshadowed the ascension, or going up, of Jesus, our High Priest, into heaven, or the Holy of Holies above. Thus was Christ's ascension well declared and prefigured already in the Old Testament Scriptures.

But it is also well declared in the New Testament. It is a mistake to suppose, as the objection assumes, that it is mentioned only by Mark and Luke. It is, at least, clearly implied also in Matthew's and John's narratives. Thus, in St. Matthew's Gospel, our Lord is represented as saying: "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." And St. John tells us that our Lord told His disciples that "the Son of man would ascend up where He was before"; and that, after His resurrection, He said to Mary Magdalene: "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God." Nor are the other sacred writers entirely silent, as the objection assumes, about the ascension of Christ. St. Paul expressly

declares that Christ "was received up into glory." And St. Peter declares that Christ "is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God." And the Book of Revelation is full of proofs that Christ, in His glorified humanity, *i. e.*, in the glorified body in which He lived here on earth, is now in heaven. The Scriptural proof, therefore, in addition to all that Mark and Luke declare, of the reality, or actual fact, of the Savior's ascension, is abundant. And we may, therefore, as believers in these inspired Scriptures, assume, as a most certain truth, as our text declares, that Jesus, our Lord, in the presence of His gathered disciples, ascended, from Olivet, up into heaven.

II. The Time of This Blessed Occurrence is worthy, next, of our careful notice.

St. Luke, in Acts, i:3, states definitely that this ascension of Christ occurred just forty days after His resurrection. "He showed Himself alive," he says, "after His passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them," *i. e.*, His disciples, "forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

This is, indeed, a most valuable statement. Much in the way of evidential confirmation of Christ's character and mission, and of the divine truth of Christianity, and of the divine constitution of the Christian Church, would have been lost, or would, at least, have been clouded with uncertainty and doubt, if Christ had not thus remained during these forty days after His resurrection, and if we had not the sure record that He did thus remain, and did show Himself, and confirm His resurrection, and give further needed instruction to His disciples.

But, during forty days, we are assured, He did remain, and did, in the clearest possible way, give evidence that He was, indeed, risen; and only then, only when once this evidence was most clearly given, so clearly given that no honest investigator of the fact would doubt it, only then, at the end of the protracted period of manifestation of Himself as the Risen Lord, only then did His ascension occur.

Other reasons, also, no doubt, existed for this delay, during forty days, of the Savior's ascension. He thus delayed in order to give to His apostles yet further instruction concerning their special work in organizing the Christian Church and in the spread of Christianity. "Speaking to them," says St. Luke, "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God"; and again: "He was taken up after that He had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen." And we may, also, yet add that undoubtedly the Savior thus remained, during this period of forty days, in order to encourage His disciples, and in order to restore them again to their old faith and trust in Him as the Christ, the promised Messiah and Redeemer of the world. Sadly, indeed, were they dispirited by all that had occurred. His death was a rude and dreadful shock to their confidence in Him as the Christ. To be preachers of Him and His gospel, first of all, therefore, they must be lifted out of this gloom. They must again be assured of His Messiahship. The old confidence in Him must again be restored. Hence He again thus shows Himself to them, and, by doing so, turns all their doubt into assurance, all their gloom into joy, all their darkness into the bright light of a glorious and happy spiritual day.

The Savior, doubtless, would rather, at once, after His resurrection, have ascended to heaven. But willingly and gladly He remained until His life-work here was fully done. Thus willingly and gladly, bitter as our life-experiences may sometimes be, may we also live on and live out our appointed days, having a longing for our heavenly home, and yet glad, for God's glory, and for the good of our families and friends, of the Church and the world, to tarry in the flesh, at our posts of Christian duty, till God Himself shall say to us: "It is enough, come up higher."

And, when once our appointed time of departure does come, and when we are about to take our ascension from earth to heaven, like Jesus, let us also then gather our friends and relatives around us, and, with our last words on earth, instruct, encourage, warn, direct them, and thus, with our dying breath, seek to point them to the skies and bid them meet us there. Such last pious words endure abidingly in the memories of those to whom they are addressed, and linger often as a benediction down to the end of life.

Notice, however, now also,

III. The Place of Our Savior's Ascension.

It was, we read, from the Mount of Olives. "Then returned they," says Luke, "unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath-day's journey." And here in our text he also tells us: "And He led them out as far as Bethany," or, "as far as towards Bethany," which lay somewhere on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and there "He was parted from them and was carried up into heaven."

This place of ascension which Jesus thus Himself specially chose, and whither He Himself led His disciples to witness His departure back again to heaven, was a place very familiar to Him, and closely associated with many interesting and with some most solemn events in His earthly life. Here He had often, we read, in times of special burden and responsibility, retired for secret prayer. Here also He had often withdrawn with His disciples in order to instruct them more fully concerning Himself and the great truths of His kingdom. Here, also, in the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, He had often found the quiet retirement and rest and holy social fellowship and love which He needed and for which His pure human nature at times so ardently longed. Here also, from Olivet's overhanging brow, He wept His tears over doomed Jerusalem, which would not receive Him as its Savior. And here especially, in the Garden of Gethsemane, nestling at the base of this sacred mount, just beyond the Brook Kedron, He passed through His great spiritual agony, when His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful even unto death," and when His "sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Thus was the Mount of Olives most intimately associated with our Savior's earthly life; and it was fitting, therefore, that it also should be the place of His ascension: the last spot of our earth which His pierced feet should touch before they should tread, in the triumphs of His Mediatorial glory, the heavenly world.

As the scene especially of so much in His earthly life that had in it the experiences of humiliation, the place of His former prayers and conflicts and tears

and agony and bloody sweat, how especially proper that it also should be the scene of His final exaltation: the witness of His ultimate triumph and glory, the sacred locality from which, with celestial splendor, and with the foregleams of heavenly radiance already covering Him, He went up to sit forever upon His Mediatorial throne. Yes! It was fitting that Olivet, in whose Garden of Gethsemane Jesus once knelt and agonized, should also be the holy summit of His triumphant ascension!

This is always God's order in spiritual experiences. Our Gethsemanes, as well as our Master's, where we really humble ourselves even unto death, if needs be, under God's will, become to us blessed and lofty mounts of spiritual ascension: great moral mountain peaks from which our souls look out into broader visions of God's glory, and from which they ascend into ever higher and holier fellowship with God and with heaven. Olivet with its Gethsemane, to us, as to Christ our Lord, becomes always, in the end, Olivet, the mount of our ascension to our heavenly glory.

But, let us now notice more particularly,

IV. The Manner of the Savior's Ascension.

Many special features characterize this ascension of our divine Lord to which we will do well to give most careful thought, for they are full both of instruction and of comfort to us as His disciples.

(*a*) It was a **visible** ascension.

His resurrection was unseen. No one saw Him coming forth from His grave. It was not necessary that there should be witnesses of that occurrence. Of the fact of His resurrection He gave abundant

proof afterward in His repeated appearances to many whom, by actual sight and clearest evidences, He assured that He was indeed risen.

But of this fact of His ascension there could, in the nature of the case, be no such subsequent ocular proof given. The occurrence must itself, therefore, be seen. He must be actually beheld, not by one, or a few, but by many, in His going up from earth to heaven.

And thus, also, was He beheld going up. The record, upon this point, is very specific and positive. "While they beheld He was taken up;" "While they looked steadfastly toward heaven He went up;" "A cloud received Him out of their sight;" "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." These are emphatic testimonies, of actual eye witnesses, to the fact of His ascension. As we may infer from the narrative in the first chapter of Acts, one hundred and twenty of His disciples thus beheld Him ascend. Occurring in broad day, from the top of a mount, near to Jerusalem and Bethany and other neighboring villages, possibly it was also beheld by even thousands of other spectators. At any rate, it was seen by many, and is, therefore, a well-attested and assured fact; so that we have a solid and rational basis for our Christian faith when we declare, as we do in the Creed: "He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

(*b*) He ascended **bodily.**

It was no phantom of Christ, not the soul or spirit

only of Christ, not the divine nature only of Christ, but the whole Christ, the God-man, in His unseparated and inseparable union of His human and divine natures, that then and there ascended. As the Incarnate Word, He then took up with Him, in union with His divine nature, our full human nature: body, soul and spirit. That same body which was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, in which He tabernacled here on earth, which was nailed to the cross, which slept in Joseph's sepulchre, which arose again on the third day: that same body there, on Olivet, then ascended, and in that body Christ now is and lives and reveals Himself as the object of adoring wonder and worship in heaven. In that shall He forever be seen and worshiped by all the heavenly host. In that shall we, when once we gain the celestial throng, see Him and worship Him: the same, same Savior, in all respects, as when here on earth, and as He there ascended from Olivet. "This same Jesus," said the angels, "shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

(*c*) He ascended **quietly.**

When Elijah ascended, he did so, we read, with horses and chariots of fire. There was impressive outward demonstration of his departure. His going up had awe, terror, as its especial characteristics. It was fitting and right that it was so; for such an ascension became him who was the minister or representative of the stern Old Testament Dispensation of Law.

But Jesus, the founder of the New Testament Dispensation, the representative, more especially, of the milder economy of the Gospel, the minister espe-

cially of God's grace and love toward man, His ascension is quiet and calm, an easy, composed home-going to the skies, in harmony with His own gentle character, a peaceful ending of His beautiful earth-life of benevolence, a happy and assured entrance upon His heavenly and eternal reward.

Thus quietly and peacefully, like that of the Master, may our departure, also, at last, be. Let us not ask for "horses and chariots of fire" to bear us to the skies: for great ecstacies of soul in our dying hour, for loud demonstrations of our acceptance with God and assurance of salvation. If God, in that hour, gives us special spiritual experiences, fills us with impressive visions of His nearness and glory, teaches our tongues to sing triumphantly our victory over death, if all this is then our experience, well. Thank God for it! But, if He then withholds such special experiences from us, let us be satisfied to go quietly home to heaven. We are none the less His children, none the less saved, none the less sure of eternal life, if we then go up into the other life in a quiet and undemonstrative way. Thus most of God's dear children go home to heaven: a quiet, peaceful falling asleep, a resting on God's sure word in Christ as the pillow of their hope and dying assurance. Thus Jesus ascended. "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of sight." So easily, so calmly, so quietly did He, our Lord, ascend to the skies.

(*d*) It was a most **glorious** ascension.

No imagination can conceive fully the resplendent glory of that closing event in the life of our divine Lord here upon earth. No possible words can ade-

quately describe it. Rising calmly from the earth, a bright cloud of celestial light enfolds Him in its golden drapery, and bears Him upward, as in an ascending chariot, to the skies. An innumerable company of angels acompany and escort Him in His upward flight, chanting Him welcome back again to His heavenly home. "The chariots of God," says David, "are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them; Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive." Thus escorted by a great angelic host, forming a long and bright procession, He soars upward, higher and higher, nearer and yet nearer the gates of the celestial world. And then, as David also represents, begins a sublime angelic, antiphonal song. The angelic multitude, escorting Him, shout His approach, and, to the greater angelic host above, awaiting their coming, sing: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." Then those above respond by inquiring: "Who is this King of Glory?" To which the ascending angels reply: "The Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of Hosts: He is the King of Glory!" And then the gates are flung open; the bright throng enters; the whole heavenly multitude chant, in one great outburst of melody, their adoring praise; they lead Him, as a returning conqueror, to His uplifted mediatorial throne; they fall before Him and worship Him, crying: "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty!"

Thus gloriously, triumphantly, escorted by angelic hosts, as victor over all His foes, Jesus then ascended from all His life-work here on earth to His eternal reward above.

With somewhat, at least, of this same triumph and glory, shall we also, who are disciples of Jesus, finally ascend. What we call death will be ascension. Our heavenly home-going will be in triumph and glory. Angels will also then be our escort. The Gates of Pearl will then also open to welcome us. Multitudes will then also be waiting to receive us. Ours, also, then, will be the awaiting throne and crown and gift of an endless and glorious life.

But notice also:

(e) The **graciousness** of the Savior in His ascension.

The narrative tells us that "He lifted up His hands and blessed them; and it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." What a significant fact, as a revelation of the loving character of our divine Lord, that is. In the very act of blessing them He was taken away; and probably as long as they could see Him, they beheld Him in this gracious bodily posture, His hands extended in blessing over them, His eyes still gazing down upon them with looks of tenderest affection.

What a delightful consistency and loveliness in our Savior's character does not that reveal! From the first moment of His advent to the last view of Him in His ascension, He is always the same loving and gracious Redeemer. In His advent the angels sang: "Peace on earth and good-will to men"; and now He goes away again from our world with hands outstretched, to the very last moment, in benediction upon those whom He leaves behind.

Surely He is a most gracious and loving Savior. How deserved, therefore, the doom of the divine

declaration: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha."

The narrative tells us, however, further, that, even after His ascension, even amid all the entrancing and absorbing glories of the heavenly world upon which He had just entered, He still remembered His disciples here on earth, and sent an angelic embassage to comfort them. Even there His love for them continued the same as when, in body, He was with them here on earth. It is still so. His infinite heart of love is still true to all His disciples here below. He does not forget us. He thinks of us, and cares for us, and loves us.

> "The Lord of Life, with glory crowned,
> On heaven's exalted throne,
> Forgets not those for whom on earth
> He heaved His dying groan."

Thus having finished all His redeeming work here on earth, did Christ, our Lord, again return to the heavenly world from which He had come. Thus did He now again, in triumph, ascend, as before He had, in deep self-humiliation, descended. He now again ascends: ascends in order to assure us of the reality of another life; in order to foreshadow to us, as His disciples, our own final ascension into the same heavenly life; in order to prepare a place for us in that heavenly world so that where He is we also may be; in order to bestow upon His Church upon earth the promised gift of the Holy Ghost; in order, as our great High Priest, eternally to intercede for us; in order to sit in power at the right hand of God, to fill the Mediatorial throne, to be the object of adoring worship by all the angelic hosts and all the

multitude of redeemed saints; to come again, as Judge of quick and dead, to reward the righteous and to punish the wicked; and then to reign forever as Conqueror and King of the universe: Lord of lords and King of kings.

To this ascended Savior let us all, as His disciples, today, anew render our most devout homage. Anew let us give to Him our love, our gratitude, our faith, our service. Let us consecrate to Him our whole being. Let our lives, down to the very close on earth, be spent in His employ and in holy endeavor for His glory. Then, having thus lived in His service here, having thus loved and trusted and confessed Him as our Savior in His Church here upon earth, He also, in our dying hour, will grant to us a glorious ascension like unto His own. Then we, too, shall go up in triumph into the heavenly life. Angels of God will then also escort us as conquerors to the skies, and we also then shall reign forever, as kings and priests unto God, in His celestial kingdom.

Grant to us all, O Christ, at our last hour on earth, thus to be sharers with Thee in Thine ascension glory, and in the bliss of Thy salvation; and Thine shall be our praise and homage and worship during all the unbroken and ceaseless ages of eternity.

XVI.

WHAT DO WE KNOW OF HEAVEN?

Ascension Day.

COLLECT.

O King of Glory, Lord of Hosts, who didst this day ascend in triumph far above all heavens: we beseech Thee leave us not comfortless, but send to us the Spirit of Truth, promised of the Father; O Thou, who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

XVI.

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

JOHN, xiv:2, 3.

WE turn our thoughts easily and with especial fitness, on this holy festival of our Savior's ascension, to meditations upon the place whither He has gone, that heavenly world of which He spake to the disciples when He said: "I go to prepare a place for you," and of which, also, He spake when He cheeringly said to the dying, penitent thief: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." For the sake of the Savior we thus turn in thought, on Ascension Day, to heaven, wondering where He now is, and what the characteristics of His glorious celestial home are. And for our own sakes, also, we thus, on this festival day, and on all the days of our earthly pilgrimage, think of heaven and ask about it. For, Christ having ascended thither, thither, also, shall we, His people, at our departure out of this life, ascend. That now being His home, it also shall be our eternal home. And where He now dwells we, also, with Him, and with all His saints, shall forever dwell.

We rightly, therefore, and with especial propriety, make heaven the subject of our thought on Ascension Day, following with our upward gaze our

ascending Lord, and looking in after Him, as best with our feeble vision we can, into that celestial abode whither He has gone. There we shall soon be: we want, therefore, as well as we can, to acquaint ourselves with it, and beforehand to get ourselves spiritually ready for it, so that our final leaving of this life will be to us, as it was to our Master and Lord, only a rapturous home-going to the life eternal.

The question to which I wish, today, to invite your thought is this: What do we know of heaven?

In considering it, we may properly note,

I. That All That We Really Do Know of Heaven We Know From the Bible.

The knowledge that we shall live a future life at all after death is made certain to us alone by the Bible; and, without this divine revelation in God's word, we not so much as know surely that there is another or future life. Like the wisest of the heathen world we might, from reason, and from moral longings and aspirations of our being, hope and believe and infer that "death does not end all," and that "If a man die he shall live again"; but still we would not certainly know it. It would be, as with Socrates, a dim hope only; not, as with Paul, a firm certainty. We could not, at death, if God had not spoken to us in His word, say: "I die, but still I live. I pass out of this life, but, in doing so, I pass into another and an eternal life." All this "assurance," or knowledge of a life to come, is purely the result of divine revelation: of our possession of God's word, in which He has "brought life

and immortality into clearer light," and in which He has declared it to us as a precious certainty.

And hence, the fact even of a future life being thus purely a matter of revelation, the character of it must, of course, also necessarily be; and our actual knowledge of it must be limited to what God, in that revelation, teaches or declares concerning it.

Man, without God's word, interrogates nature concerning it, but nature gives no reply to his questionings. The stars send back to him no message concerning it. The sun and moon reflect back on him not a single ray of its glory. The music of the spheres repeats to him not a note of its blessed melody. The winds chant no anthem back to him from its enrapturing choir. Nature, I say, gives no sure answer to man either concerning the fact or the character of the heavenly life.

All our knowledge, therefore, of "heaven" is confined to what God, in the Bible, has revealed to us about heaven. That much, and that much only, concerning it we actually know.

It may also be noted,

II. That Even With the Bible, There Are Still Many Things Concerning Heaven Which God Has Not Revealed to Us, and Which We, Therefore, Still Do Not Know.

The truth is, there are many questions about "heaven," which we ask ourselves and each other, to which we yet can give no satisfactory answer; many questions about which we often speculate and wonder; which we would give all we have to know; which we sometimes think it strange that God has

not told us all about; but questions still to which there come no answer, and of which we live on ignorant and uncertain all our days.

We do not, for example, know where heaven is: whether in the air, or in the sun, or in some distant fixed star, or in the center of the stellar or solar systems; or ultimately, perhaps, here on our earth, renewed and purified by fire from the pollution of sin with which it now is cursed; whether here or there; near or far; we know not, I say, where heaven is. God has not told us, nor can the wisest of us, by study and searching, discover it. The poet has truly sung:

"I know not where that city lifts
Its jasper walls in air;
I know not where the glory beams
So marvelously fair.

I cannot see the waving hands
Upon that distant shore;
I can not hear the rapturous song
Of dear ones gone before."

No! Even with the Bible, we know not even so much as where heaven is.

And of how many other things concerning heaven we are also ignorant! Who can tell, for example, how the soul, when it leaves the body in death, finds its way to heaven; whether the relations which existed among us here upon earth shall be continued among us in heaven; whether spirits from the heavenly world ever revisit the earth, and invisibly, are sometimes around us, the living, whom they have left behind; whether children in heaven forever remain children; whether, before the resurrection,

the sainted dead have bodies, and, if so, what kind of bodies; whether the heavenly life is at all like our life here on earth, and how far it is like it; whether the inhabitants of heaven live in "communities," in "houses," in "cities," in "towns" and "villages," in "families," as we do here; whether they follow professions, business, trades, employments there, as we do here; whether they all speak one language in heaven, and, if so, what language, or whether the old languages of earth shall still be used in heaven; whether God will, in heaven, manifest Himself to us in some visible form and expression of His glory, or will the glorified person of the "God-man," Christ Jesus, be the only expression of His being and presence; whether there will be stated times and seasons, and established forms and orders of worship; all these, and many things more, are questions concerning "heaven" of which we are really in total ignorance, because, concerning them all, God has deemed it best to make no revelation.

And why, we naturally here ask, is it that God has thus revealed to us so little, comparatively, concerning "heaven"? Why has He not, in the Bible, told us all about "heaven"? Why has He not described it to us more fully, so that we might know all about it, and think of it, and talk of it, and picture it to our imagination, with the same clear conception or apprehension of it with which we think and speak of and imagine some distant earthly country or city which we have never seen, but which has been fully described to us? Why? For many reasons.

One reason is: If a full disclosure of heaven were made to us, if we did know all about it, such knowledge, it is evident, would largely prevent the exer-

cise of that faith or simple trust in God's word concerning heaven which God wishes us to exercise, and which, morally, fits us for heaven. God here wishes us to walk, in regard to heaven, as in regard to many other things, by faith, and not by sight, to honor Him by trusting Him, to follow the example of Abraham, who, "by faith, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he went."

Possibly another reason why God has told us so little concerning heaven is: Because if we knew much more of it, our very selfishness might, in this, as in so many other things, master us, and we might be supremely governed, even in our piety and motive for being Christians, and serving God, by the desire to secure to ourselves an eternal home in a place so blessed as that. But what an unworthy motive that would be: a mere refined selfishness, and no true love for God at all. For His own sake God wants us to love and serve Him: not for the mere selfish sake of thereby winning heaven.

Another reason why God has told us so little about heaven is: Because a full knowledge of heaven would, doubtless, entirely dissatisfy us and unfit us for the duties of earth. If heaven were fully laid open to our vision, if its attractions and glories were ever in our full sight, if we could constantly hear its music, and catch its holy waves of gladness and joy, and behold, perpetually, in the distance, its ecstatic, white-robed multitude of worshipers, if we could, daily, in some way, behold our own loved ones there, and see the whole assembly of the Redeemed there, and, above all, if we could now, by

some wondrous gift of vision, see the glorified blessed Savior there—were, I say, all this, daily, now lying open to our sight, who of us would, or could, be content longer to remain here upon earth? How unfitted we would at once become for these tame duties of earth! How discontented and dissatisfied with all around us here we would soon become! How we would lose interest in business, in our home-life, in Church, in State, in everything! How this vision of heaven would absorb and engross us, how earthly duties would be lost sight of in the enraptured and coveted longing for the heavenly glory; the present forgotten and swallowed up in the desired bliss of the future. No! No! It would not be best for us now, with life's present duties on us, to know any more of heaven than we do. We know enough. To know more would totally unfit us for the discipline and training and duties and labors for His glory, for which God has put us and keeps us here.

But there is a fourth reason why God has not fully revealed the heavenly life to us: we could not understand it if He had. In our intellectual pride, we sometimes, no doubt, think that we could comprehend even heaven if God would describe it to us. But could we? No! Suppose, as some one else has suggested, we, of this nineteenth century, could today go back to the first century of our Christian era, and should attempt to describe, even to the most intelligent of the Greeks and Romans of that age, the civilization of our present age. Suppose we should describe to them our ocean steamers and railways and telegraphs and sewing machines and phonographs and printing presses. Suppose we should

describe to them one of our great daily papers, containing news not a day old from every part of the civilized globe. Suppose we would give them a description of one of our printing presses, and tell them that it prints 30,000 such papers in a single hour. Could they understand what we would thus describe to them? Of course not! Nineteen centuries of human progress lie between them and us. For them, then, to comprehend all these things of our day and age is simply impossible. So with us now, in our comprehension of heaven. It is simply impossible. The life of heaven is so far above all that we, here on earth, experience or know, so different in many respects from it, so unlike all that we now see, so far above and different from all our present modes of conceiving and apprehending knowledge, that, without enlarging our mental and spiritual capacities, God probably could not make the things of heaven comprehensible to us. Because of the very feebleness of our present power to conceive, and understand, and appreciate supernatural and spiritual things, even if God were to give us a full description of heaven, we could still not understand it: just as a savage, just because he is a savage, could not understand and appreciate a learned book, or a fine painting, or a beautiful piece of statuary; or just as your child, just because he is a child, could not, with any description or explanation you could give it, fully understand and appreciate the science of natural philosophy, or of mathematics, or of astronomy. The object described is, in its very nature, far above the power of the child's present mental development, or power of comprehension. Such children, in respect to "heaven," are

we. It is wholly above all our present highest power of apprehension. And with all that God might possibly tell us about it, we still would and could really know but little, very little, about it.

There is, however, yet another reason which suggests itself, why God has not revealed more of heaven to us in this life, namely: With our present bodily or physical constitution, fitting us for this present material life, we could not endure it if He did. If God were now, this moment, as we are here in His house, to make to any one of us a full disclosure of heaven, we would, doubtless, instantly die under the overpowering weight of such manifested glory. These physical powers of ours, as we all well know, have their limit in capacity of endurance. They can not bear an excess even of earthly excitement. How much less the excitement, then, which would necessarily be caused by a revelation to us of the excessive glory of the heavenly life. Daniel had no strength left in him, and his comeliness was turned into corruption, when only an angel from heaven appeared to him. John, though he had, when He was on earth, often reclined on the Savior's bosom, yet, when that same Savior appeared afterward to him in His heavenly glory, fell at His feet as one that was dead. Isaiah cried out with fear before his vision of God, saying, "Woe is me, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Ezekiel fell down as one dead under the blinding glory of the revealed presence of God. Paul fell smitten to the ground when Jesus revealed Himself to him in His heavenly glory on the way to Damascus. The disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration were overpowered and fell to the ground amid the

unveiled glory of their Lord. And so in many other instances. Even the faintest disclosures of that bright, heavenly glory-land were too much for man, and God had again to veil and hide it from his vision.

There is necessity, then, for this present imperfect revelation to us of heaven. We now, not only do see through "a glass darkly," but we necessarily also must do so. As Jay well says: "We have not eyes now to see that brilliancy; we have not ears now to endure that melody; we have not frames now to bear up under that weight of glory." Or, as the apostle declares: "Flesh and blood can not inherit the kingdom of God."

God, then, we must conclude, does not wish us now to know much of heaven, or of the future life. We know all that, in God's judgment, is now best for us to know. If to know more were for our good, He would also have revealed more to us.

Hence, with what, in His word, He has revealed to us, we should be content, and should not seek to know more. To seek to know more, in other ways, by means outside of the divine Word, is sinful. Hence, Spiritualism is both false and wicked. The departed come not back again to our earth. The few, named in Scripture, who returned, were miraculously and for special divine purposes so returned. But even they said nothing to mortals on earth descriptive of that heavenly world whence they had come, as though God, before their return, had specially enjoined, in this respect, silence upon them. Moses and Elijah, on the Mount of Transfiguration, said nothing to the disciples about heaven: they talked only of the cross, of the death which Jesus was soon to suffer for the world's salvation. Laza-

rus, of Bethany, had been four days in the spirit world, and yet we do not read of a single word, descriptive of what he there experienced and saw, that he ever uttered. Paul was caught up, he tells us, into heaven, and he there saw glorious sights—sights unlawful, or impossible rather, to describe—and hence also he makes no attempt to do so. Abraham refused the request of the rich man in Hades to send Lazarus to warn his five brethren, "lest they also come into this place of torment," saying: "They have Moses and the prophets, if they hear not them neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Our Savior, also during the forty days, after His resurrection, said but little or nothing in the way of description of heaven. Only John, in the Apocalypse, describes heaven; and even he describes rather the heaven that is to be than the one that actually now is. "I saw," he writes, "a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."

But I now pass to a third general thought, or blessed fact, rather, with regard to heaven, namely:

III. That, With All That We Do Not Know About Heaven, We Still Know All About it That We Need to Know.

There are many precious things about heaven which the Bible does reveal to us and does tell us of: more perhaps that we have ever gathered and put together before our minds, so as to help ourselves in the fullest possible knowledge of it.

We know from the Bible that there is a heaven. That precious truth it declares without a doubt. As

surely as there is an earth here beneath our feet, as surely as there shines a sun yonder in the heavens, as surely as there are stars in the vaulted brow of night, so surely also, says the Bible to us, there is somewhere a heaven, the abode of God, the blessed, glorious, eternal home of His saints.

This heaven, we also know from the Bible, is an actual locality. It is not, as some have imagined, a mere moral state or spiritual condition, but it is a real and objective place: as much so as is America, or Europe, as much so as is our earth, or as one of the planets or stars. It is, we read in the Bible, a "home," a "house," a "city," a something to be seen, to be inhabited. There are, we read, material bodies there. Moses and Elijah came down to the Mount of Transfiguration to meet Christ in material bodies, in visible forms. Enoch and Elijah went up with material bodies into heaven. So did Christ. So doubtless did the saints who arose at His resurrection. And they are all, in their bodies, there now. Material bodies must, however, have a material place in which to live. Such a place is heaven. The assurance, also, of Jesus confirms it. "Where I am," He says, "there shall also my servants be." He also in our text says: "I go to prepare a place for you." Other Scripture passages prove it. We read of "entering into the holy place" and of our "hope laid up in heaven." We know, then, I repeat, from the Bible, that heaven is as actual and real and visible as any place with which we are now acquainted here on earth.

And we know, also, from the Bible, that heaven, wherever it is, is an infinitely beautiful and glorious place. It is the home of God: the capitol of the great

divine King of the universe. How glorious, then, must it not be! It is the place which Jesus has gone to prepare for His saints. Prepared by Him for His redeemed, must it not be an inexpressibly beautiful place? Would it be an ordinary home which such a Savior as He is would get ready for his people? How thrillingly entrancing the Bible descriptions of it! What a picture of transcendent beauty and enchantment opens out before us, even in the slight uplifting only of the veil between it and us. "A city," we read, "of pure gold, like unto clear glass: its light like a jasper clear as crystal; its walls great and high, and garnished with all manner of precious stones; its gates resplendent pearls; its streets pure gold; its river a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb; among its trees its tree of life, having twelve manner of fruits, and yielding its fruit every month, and the leaves of it for the healing of the nations; with no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it; and with no need of the sun, or of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Beautiful city of God! Glorious home of the saints! Paradise, celestial Eden, of the redeemed! "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

We know also from the Bible that heaven is an inexpressibly happy place.

Think for a moment of what, as we are told, will not be there! No sin, no temptation, no sickness, no pain, no wrong, no injustice, no fraud, no selfishness,

no cruelty, no hatred, no doubt, no fear, no disease, no weariness, no foes, no dangers, no ignorance, no disappointments, no burdens, no separations, no bereavements, no tears, no death, no coffins, no shrouds, no cemeteries, no graves! "All these," says God's word to us, "shall there be unknown." "They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." "There shall be no more curse there." "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes there." "There shall be no night there." "And there shall be no more death there, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

What bliss to reach, at last, a world where all these shall be known no more; where, at last, we shall be forever relieved from all these ills and burdens and sorrows of this present life. But that is heaven. That blessed exemption from all these earthly griefs is the portion of those who now dwell in that blessed celestial home.

Think, however, of what the Bible tells us will be in heaven. Think of the positive elements of that heavenly happiness: of the knowledge that there shall flood the soul, of the enlarged powers of mind which shall there be enjoyed, of the increased capacities for enjoyment which shall there be granted us, of the perfect purity and holiness which shall there reign, of the unselfish love and tenderness which shall there speak from every lip and swell every heart, of the music and song and worship of heaven, of its blessed society, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, saints of all lands and ages, angels and archangels, Seraphim and Cherubim, all these as

your eternal companions, as your intimate associates forever. Think of your own precious loved ones, who have gone before you thither, and await your coming there, there to be rejoined to you again, and never, while eternity rolls on, again to be sundered from you. Think, above all, of the nearness and love and unclouded glory of God, of the unveiled splendor and peace and blessing of Christ, all of which shall there eternally be yours. Think, I say, of all these precious elements of the positive bliss of the heavenly life, the portion of the saints forever, and forever increasing also while eternity endures—and what mind can conceive, what tongue can express, the infinite measure of that exceeding weight of glory, of those rivers of joy, in reserve for His people, at the right hand of God?

Happy, blessed home, we repeat, of the redeemed! How the thought of what it is enkindles the desire to break loose at once from all the entanglements of earth, to lay aside the body, to soar aloft and to enter speedily its inviting gates of pearl! "Oh, that I had wings like a dove," may every Christian well say, "for then would I fly away," away from earth, with all its sins and sorrows, and "be at rest," there where sin is unknown and where sorrow never comes!

> "Jerusalem! My happy home,
> My soul still pants for thee!
> Then shall my labors have an end
> When I thy joys shall see."

There is yet one other most blessed fact concerning heaven, of which the Bible tells us, which is the best of all: it tells us how we may all get to heaven.

That, I have just said, is the best news of all. Alas! if there were such a blessed heaven, and we yet knew not the way thither! But, blessed be God, there is a way thither, and that way we know. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, is the way: the one only way, the open and welcome way for all. He Himself says: "I am the way." And the Gospel message to us all is: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

To gain heaven, then, my hearer, come, by faith, to Christ. This is the way: walk ye in it; and keep ye in it; and thus shall ye reach the life eternal; and thus shall ye gain entrance, at last, into that heavenly city, whose maker and builder is God, whose glory is the unceasing and everlasting joy of the soul.

XVII.

THE ADORABLE HOLY GHOST.

Whit Sunday.

COLLECT.

O God, who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit: grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

XVII.

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth."

JOHN, xiv:16, 17.

OUR text is a clear and specific expression of the doctrine of the Trinity. It refers to the divine "Father"; is uttered by the divine "Son"; and contains a promise of the divine "Holy Spirit."

It especially, however, directs our mind to the Holy Spirit, the third person in the adorable Trinity, assuring us that, in answer to the prayer of the Son, the Father would send or give the Spirit, forever to abide in and with His disciples and church.

Analyzing it, we find this language of the Savior suggestive of three general thoughts, bearing upon the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, namely,

I. The Distinct Personality of the Holy Spirit;

II. The abiding Presence, in and with the Church, of the Holy Spirit; and,

III. The Especial Instrument or Means employed in the work of man's salvation by the Holy Spirit.

To these three thoughts I invite your prayerful attention.

I. The first truth taught us here in our text is: **The Distinct Personality of the Holy Spirit.**

This fact of the Personality of the Holy Spirit, that is, of His existence as a separate and distinct

Person in the Godhead, is just as positively and clearly declared in the Sacred Scriptures as is the fact of the personality of God the Father, or of God the Son. And the very same Scriptural proofs, precisely, by which we establish that God the Father is a real person, or that God the Son is a real person, establish also that God the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, is a real person.

The Scriptures, for example, always speak of the Holy Spirit as a distinct person. And, on the assumption that He is not thus a separate and distinct divine person, their language concerning Him is, at once, utterly unintelligible. What intelligible meaning, let me ask, can any one, who denies this personality of the Holy Spirit, attach to all those passages of Scripture which speak of the "unpardonable sin," or the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? Or how, upon the assumption that the Holy Spirit is not a person, shall we intelligibly understand the Savior's "great commission" to His disciples and Church, just before His ascension: "Go ye, and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?" And how, then, shall we understand the "apostolic benediction": "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen"?

Remember, also, that the Scriptures invariably, when referring to the Holy Spirit, use the masculine personal pronoun, never referring to the Holy Spirit by the impersonal pronoun, "it," but always using the personal pronoun, "He," saying: "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come"; "He shall teach you

all things"; "He shall bring all things to your remembrance that I have spoken unto you"; "He shall testify of Me"; "He shall abide with you forever"; and many more similar expressions; all of which, if language means anything, are expressive of the most distinct personality.

And then, in addition to all this, remember, also, that the Scriptures repeatedly ascribe both personal divine acts and attributes to the Holy Spirit: such as Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Sovereignty, Eternity: such as being the Author of Spiritual Life, as being a Witness, a Revealer of the Truth, a Sender forth of the Apostles; as capable of being "vexed," "grieved," "quenched," "resisted."

Remember, I say, all this, and then, denying the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit, explain intelligibly, if you can, all that the Scriptures thus declare concerning Him. No! It is impossible. Denying this article of our faith, these numerous passages of God's word, at once, all become inexplicable. And we are shut up either to accept the truth to which they all thus plainly teach, or, in total disregard of the clearest possible language and divine assertion, to reject it.

The Holy Spirit, then, according to the plain teaching of God's word, is not, as some declare, a mere attribute of the Godhead. Nor is He, as others conceive, a mere influence, proceeding out from the other persons of the Godhead. Nor is He a mere divine force of spiritual energy, emanating from the Godhead, and operating in the accomplishment of the divine will. But, the Holy Ghost is Himself a person: a distinct, separate, living, divine substance: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but equal

in glory and co-eternal in majesty, both with the Father and with the Son. And hence, in the Creed, following the declaration of our faith "in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth," and "in Jesus Christ, His only Son," we then appropriately declare that we "believe in the Holy Ghost." Or, as the first article of our "Augsburg Confession" expresses it: "Our Churches unanimously hold and teach agreeably to the Decree of the Council of Nice, that there is only one Divine Essence, which is called, and is, truly God; but that there are three persons in this one Divine Essence, equally powerful, equally eternal: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." Thus,

> "God the Father, God the Son,
> And God the Spirit, we adore:
> That Sea of Life and Love unknown,
> Without a bottom or a shore."

II. The second truth taught in our text is: **The Abiding Presence of the Holy Ghost In and With the Church.**

Our Savior, when He uttered these words, was near the hour of His passion. He was soon to leave His disciples. Saddened as they were by the knowledge of this fact, He comforts them with the assurance that, although He would thus depart, they would still not be left alone. His departure, He assures them, should be followed by the advent of another of the persons of the Godhead, a divine person like Himself, another paraclete or comforter, namely the divine Holy Ghost, "The Spirit of Truth."

And the presence, He tells them, of this Holy

Ghost, shall, when once He has come, unlike His own, be an abiding presence. "I will pray the Father," He says, "and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can not receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you."

Again He says to them: "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." And again, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."

Two truths are, in these passages, clearly taught us, namely, first, that the ascension or departure of the Savior, the second Person of the Trinity, was, for some divine reason, the condition of the advent of the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Trinity; and, secondly, that this Holy Spirit, when He once, in fulfillment of the Savior's promise made His descent, His presence would henceforth be a perpetual or abiding presence. "He shall abide with you forever."

And this presence of the Holy Ghost, let it be further noted, is not simply a presence in the hearts of individual Christians, separate and isolated from each other, but it is in them, in their organic capacity, as the Church or "Body of Christ." The presence promised is the presence of the Holy Spirit with the Church. Individuals are the creatures but

of a day; and this promise of the Savior that the Spirit should abide with them forever, could not, in them as mere individuals, be fulfilled. But the Church, in her divine organic capacity, in her existence as the mystical and spiritual Body of Christ, is eternal. In her, therefore, in her pure word and sacraments, in her divinely-ordained office of the ministry, in her faith or holy apostolic creed, in her primitive, apostolic polity and government, in her historic development in the past, in her conflicts with sin and Satan now in the present, and in all her future struggles and battles with the forces of evil, for the preservation and extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, the divine Holy Spirit has been, is now, and will always be, in her and with her: guiding, enlightening, comforting, sustaining her: triumphantly leading her on against all opposition, until, at last, her moral reign shall be universal, and "the kingdoms of this world everywhere shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."

Ours, then, is "the dispensation of the Holy Spirit"; the dispensation of the Holy Spirit abiding in the Church: present without intermission in her, always with her, constantly taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto her, always giving efficacy to her ordinances and divine power to her activities, and making her mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Or, in other words, just as Jesus, during His ministry promised, the presence of the Holy Spirit is perpetual, and the "dispensation of the Holy Spirit," inaugurated on the day of Pentecost, is permanent. "He shall abide with you forever."

But I pass on to the third thought contained in our text, namely,

III. The Especial Instrument or Means, Employed in the Work of Man's Salvation, by the Holy Spirit.

That instrument, we are told, is divine truth: the truth as revealed to us in God's inspired word: the truth as it centers in Christ, who is the embodiment and the full divine expression of truth. "I will pray the Father," was the language of Jesus to His disciples, "and He shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth." And again He tells them: "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." And, in His touching intercessory prayer for His disciples, He again says: "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." And the apostle Paul, also, in his letter to the Ephesians, emphatically declares: "The fruit of the Spirit is in all truth."

The pure word of God, then; the inspired teachings of evangelists and apostles as contained in our canonical scriptures; the sacraments as divinely-ordained expressions of divine truth and vehicles for the communication of the divine grace promised in the truth; the doctrines and life of Jesus, the inspired record of His death and resurrection, of His ascension and intercession, this entire inspired word contained in these divinely-originated scriptures: this is the Holy Spirit's instrument by and through which He works to regenerate, sanctify and save man. Not by the arm of political or civil power; not by papal bulls and pontificial dogmas, contrary often to the written word; not by non-scriptural and

arbitrary decrees of councils, fallible men arrogating to themselves divine infallibility and authority in declaring to the Church her final rule of faith and life; not by any humanly-devised religious sensuousness or mere pious emotionalism, to play upon the sensibilities and arouse the feelings; not by dreams and visions and supposed communings with visitors from the spirit world; not by mere subjective individual fancies, or excited imaginings, or physical ecstacies; not by any of these does the Holy Spirit carry on and extend, in the heart and throughout the world, the great kingdom of God's grace. No! not by any of them. But, He does it all through and by the truth: the truth of God's inspired word and God's own divinely-instituted sacraments: the truth as taught and lived by the Savior, and as given and commanded by Him to be taught by His Church, especially through the ordained ministry even to the end of time. By this divine truth, God's word and God's sacraments, God's word heard, read, memorized, believed, obeyed, and the holy sacraments rightly administered, and received in the exercise of a true and living faith, by these, as they exist in the Church, used as the Holy Spirit's instruments, employed as divinely-appointed channels through which He confers grace and salvation, does He carry on and build up in the world the kingdom of Christ. Even as our immortal Augsburg Confession, Article VI, rightly teaches, when it says: "That in order that we may obtain saving faith, the ministry has been instituted, for teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments." And then adds: "For, through the instrumentality of the word and sacraments, the Holy Spirit is given, who, when and

where it pleases God, works faith in those who hear the gospel."

From these truths concerning the Holy Ghost, let us now learn, in conclusion, a few very practical lessons. Let us learn:

(*a*) To recognize more fully, as an article of our Christian faith, this personality in the Godhead of the Holy Ghost. In other words, let us more intelligently and truly accept the Christian doctrine as expressed in the third article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

Many, I fear, calling themselves Christians, and being probably, also Christians, are yet very confused and vague in their apprehension of this dogma of the personality of the Holy Ghost. They do not recognize Him as distinctly and actually a Person in the Trinity. That, however, according to the Scriptures, He is. Thus, as a divine Person, let us, therefore, also apprehend and know Him.

Let us learn, from this subject, also:

(*b*) The Duty of Direct Prayer to the Holy Ghost.

Is the Holy Ghost a divine Person, as the Father is a divine Person and as the Son is a divine Person? And are they all, according to the Scriptures, coequal in divine essence and being? Then, manifestly, we should address our worship as directly to the one as to the other. If we address our prayers to the Father as God, and to the Son as God, then surely ought we also address them to the Holy Ghost as God. For He also, as really as the Father and as the Son, is God: a distinct divine personality.

We make, in this respect, a mistake frequently, I fear, in our worship. We possibly wrong the Holy Ghost in withholding from Him that direct recogni-

tion as God and that direct worship as God, which as God, as a Person in adorable divine Trinity, is due to Him. It all grows out of our confused and vague theology: our weak apprehension of the true personality of the Holy Ghost. We conceive the Holy Ghost too much as merely a divine influence, a gracious impersonal energy, a mere emanating spiritual force going out from the Father or from the Son, and bestowed by them upon us, just as the rays of light and beams of heat stream out over the earth from the sun as their radiating center and source.

Let us correct this misconception of the nature and personality of the Holy Ghost. Let us know Him, distinctly and clearly as Himself true God. And, as such, let us directly worship Him. In our hymns let us directly address Him and invoke His presence and power, singing, as we often do, "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove;" "Eternal Spirit, we confess;" "Gracious Spirit, Love Divine;" "O Spirit of the Living God." And thus, also, let us, I repeat, pray to Him, saying: "O Holy Ghost, Divine Spirit, Third Person of the Trinity, bestow upon us, and upon the Church, and upon our lost world, Thy enlightening, regenerating, sanctifying and saving grace."

We learn also:

(*c*) The duty of emphasizing in our Christian faith the Fact of the Abiding Presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church.

This, too, is a truth concerning the Holy Ghost which we often forget. We are greatly disposed to think of the Holy Ghost as being far off from us, as dwelling in heaven, as being only an occasional visitor to the Church and people of God here on

earth, as coming to us only in answer to our prayers for His presence. The blessed fact, however, is, as we have seen, that, since the ascension of the Savior, and as His promised gift, the Holy Spirit is now always in and with the Church. He abides in us as the disciples of Christ. He now dwells here in the Church as His home.

What a precious truth this is. And what a revelation this, at once, also, is of the mighty spiritual possibilities, at all times, of the Church. Has the Church God's word? Has she the sacraments? Has she organization? Has she the office of the ministry? Has she her places of worship, her ordinances of religion, her established agencies for the spread of the Gospel, her Christian institutions and literature, has she, in the gracious kindness of God, all these? And has she now, also, in and with all these, the constant presence of the Holy Ghost, to give divine energy and wisdom and power and guidance to her in her use of all these? Then, what more does she need to make her invincible in her endeavors to build up on earth the kingdom of Christ? What more could God give her?

Let us lay hold, then, of this precious truth. Let us realize that the Holy Ghost is always with us. Let us always, therefore, avail ourselves, in all our Christian worship and in all our efforts to build up Christ's kingdom, of His presence. Let us, by faith, and in prayer, and by a constant spiritual casting of ourselves upon Him, lay hold of His strength and be filled with His grace. Then will we, also, always be spiritually strong. Then, thus going forth in the might of the Holy Ghost, will the Church always be mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of

sin and in the conquest of the world for Christ: "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

We learn, also, from this subject:

(*d*) The Value and absolute Necessity, in order to the attainment of the true Piety, of correct and full Bible Instruction.

Divine truth, as revealed in the inspired Scriptures, is, as we have seen, the instrument used by the Holy Spirit in the salvation of souls. There must, then, be a knowledge of that truth. Hence, there must be instruction in the Word. The Sunday schools must explain and enforce it. Parents must teach it in the home of their children. Pastors must catechize and indoctrinate young people in it. Thus must much be made, by the Church, of God's Word: fixing it in the memory, lodging it as divine seed in the heart, grounding it as a governing law in the conscience and life. That divine truth the Holy Spirit will then use, and the blessed result will be Christian character and a new spiritual life in Christ.

But, finally, we yet, also, learn from this subject:

(*e*) Our duty as Christians, living as we do in this full dispensation of the Holy Ghost, to grow rapidly in grace and to attain to eminence in Christian life.

There is, in view of our spiritual privileges, and in view of this constant presence with us of the Holy Ghost, ready, through the Word and by the Church, to lift us up and help us forward in our life in Christ; there is, I say, in view of all this, no excuse for any one of us to be an ordinary Christian; to be content with low spiritual attainments; to have but little spiritual power; to possess but small measures of Christian joy and hope. God wants us all to be

much more, spiritually, than we are. The Holy Spirit is with us to make much more of us. Let us ourselves also, then, aspire to be much more. Let us have a holy ambition to be eminent Christians, to attain to the full measure of sainthood in Christ Jesus. Let us yield ourselves fully to the unhindered indwelling and operation of the Holy Ghost; and let our daily prayer be, that He, the Divine Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, whose advent to the Church, on the day of Pentecost, we today commemorate, may sanctify us fully in body, soul and spirit; use us freely in doing His will, and bring us, at last, in the perfected image of Christ, into the holiness and bliss of the life eternal above.

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

XVIII.

OUR DIVINE HELPER IN PRAYER.

Whit Sunday.

COLLECT.

O God, who didst give Thy Holy Spirit to Thine apostles: grant unto Thy people the performance of their petitions, so that on us to whom Thou hast given faith, Thou mayest also bestow peace; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

XVIII.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered."

ROMANS, viii :26.

THERE is no Christian duty which is so difficult to discharge aright as the simple duty of prayer. To resort to our accustomed places of prayer, to assume the appearance and attitude of prayer, to repeat the forms and language of prayer, all these may be easily and regularly done, and yet, with them all, there may be no real and true prayer; just as a parrot may be trained to use the words and sounds of articulate speech and yet not really speak, or just as some ingeniously-constructed musical instrument, when wound up and properly adjusted, may discourse sweet music, and yet, of course, know nothing of music.

Real prayer is an act of the soul. It is an exercise which is purely spiritual in its character: the spirit of man being uplifted in it to the contemplation of spiritual objects, yearning and pleading for spiritual blessings, subject to spiritual influences, and brought into direct and personal spiritual communion with God, the infinite and eternal Spirit.

So entirely spiritual, indeed, is this act of real prayer, so far beyond and above the domain of all that is merely natural and only human, that no man,

of himself, and without divine aid, can truly pray. Only as God, by His Holy Spirit, helps him to pray, and moves and teaches and guides him in prayer, is he able truly to pray. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord."

> "No heavenly fire my heart can raise
> Without the Spirit's aid;
> His breath must kindle prayer and praise,
> Or I am cold and dead."

This need of divine help in prayer the apostles felt when, on one occasion, as you recollect, they came to Christ with the request: "Lord, teach us to pray": a prayer to be taught how to pray; a prayer for power with God in prayer. They had, doubtless, from their very childhood, as pious Jews, been accustomed, in some way and in some sense, to pray. And yet, intimacy with Christ, and hearing Him, from time to time, pray, had made them feel that they really knew nothing, as yet, of true prayer, and needed, like little children, to be taught how to pray. And Jesus did, in answer to their request, teach them how to pray. He gave them, in the so-called "Lord's Prayer," a form of prayer. He explained to them the true spiritual nature of prayer. He showed them by His example the duty and blessedness of prayer. And not only while He was with them did He thus personally teach them concerning prayer, but, when He came, at last, to leave them, He assured them that the Holy Ghost, whom He would send to them from the Father, would continue, in this duty as in every other, to be their divine Teacher and Helper. "But the Comforter, which is

the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

And this promised power and help of the Holy Ghost in prayer, the apostles and early Church did, also, we read, as a divine gift only to them, possess it. On the contrary, this promised power and help of the Holy Ghost in prayer is a continued gift in the Church, and its possession is the privilege of all Christians in all ages: of all now, as of all then, in the days of the apostles.

Miraculous gifts and helps from the Holy Ghost, in answer to prayer and in connection with prayer, have, it is true, ceased; but all the ordinary or merely gracious operations of the Holy Ghost, which were then enjoyed by the apostles and by the early Christian Church, each Christian may now, also, enjoy. The Holy Ghost now helps us to pray just as He then helped them to pray. He is now our Enligtener, Instructor, Comforter, Inciter, Strengthener, Guide, Sanctifier, Helper, in prayer, just as He then was theirs. And we, with the apostle, can say, as in our text: "Likewise the Spirit, also, helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered."

Let us note carefully the language of our text. "Likewise the Spirit also," is its language, "helpeth our infirmities": our "infirmities," or weakness, in prayer.

I. What Are, Let Us Ask, Some of Our "Infirmities" in Prayer?

Alas! they are many. Many are the "hindrances with which we meet in coming to the mercy seat." There are spiritual clogs and embarrassments and obstacles, almost without number, lying across the way of God's saints, as they seek to come to the "Throne of Grace." There are spiritual "weights" and "burdens" dragging them down, and holding them close to earth, and chaining them as prisoners to time and sense, when they long to rise and soar up into the pure clear sunlight of fellowship and communion with God. Christians do have their "infirmites" in prayer, but the Holy Spirit, says the text, helps their infirmities, or, rather helps them in their infirmities, helps them master and overcome these infirmities. They know not what things to pray for, or how to pray; but the Holy Spirit teaches them, in all its fullness, the divine science and art of prayer. They, of themselves, can not intercede and plead with God, as they would, and as they themselves feel that they ought, and must, in order to pray aright; but the Holy Spirit, who is in them, maketh intercession for them, with groanings which can not be uttered, emotions too deep for utterance, or for expression in articulate language, which every true child of God sometimes feels; in these unuttered and unutterable feelings of our burdened and oppressed hearts, when speech fails us, and language is dumb, He, the Holy Ghost, assists and sustains and comforts us; and He that thus dwells in us, even without speech or articulate language, understands, at such times, what we mean. "He that

searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." As the sainted Dr. Payson once said: "He pitied the Christian who had no longings at the Throne of Grace which he could not clothe in language."

But what are some of these "infirmities" in prayer, in which the Holy Spirit thus helps us?

There is, first, the infirmity of Ignorance.

"We know not what we should pray for as we ought." Left to ourselves, we both pray for wrong objects and fail to pray for right ones. We ask for things which would be no blessings to us if God gave them to us, and we neglect to ask for what would be for our highest good and what we really do need. We are in ignorance, in a word, of our real spiritual character, and real condition and wants. We are ignorant, also, of the true character of God. We fail to see the real and precious meaning of His promises. We are blind to the infinite excellency and merit of Christ, as our way to God, in prayer. In many respects is it true: "We know not how to pray." Spiritual ignorance, therefore, is one of our "infirmities" in prayer.

Then, secondly, we are all, in prayer, beset with the infirmity of Doubt.

Our faith is vacillating and weak. We do not really believe God's promises. We are not sure, as we should be, that God hears us when we pray. We do not feel certain that what we pray for, God will, even if best for us, certainly give us. We pray in a cloud. We come to the mercy-seat walking in a mist of doubt and uncertainty and unbelief, with nothing solid beneath us, and nothing clear in our

spiritual vision before us. We have some faith while we pray, but it is weak faith. And there is often need, even in regard to our very prayers themselves, to pray: "Lord, I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief." Doubt is, then, also, one of our "infirmities" in prayer.

Spiritual Dullness is another such "infirmity" in prayer.

We often have no spirit, no life, no heartiness in prayer. There are words, and there may also be real desire to pray. But there is, along with the words and desire, an oppressive heaviness and dullness of spirit, a spiritual coldness and sluggishness that robs us of all interest and comfort, and which makes our prayers the merest formalities, the mere hollow chatterings and mockeries only, of worship. In vain, at such times, do we seek, in our own strength, to rise above this dull spiritual state, to shake off this dreadful apathy, to lift ourselves up again into the glow of a warmer and truer devotion.

> "In vain we tune our formal songs,
> In vain we strive to rise;
> Hosannas languish on our tongues,
> And our devotion dies."

It is a distressing spiritual condition. This languor, this spiritual lassitude, this deadness of spirit, in prayer, this benumbing and cheerless absence of spiritual interest and fervor and glow and life in prayer, this, I say, to the true Christian, is real spiritual distress: inexpressible grief, and often he rises from his very knees sick at heart over the very prayers he has sought to offer. Spiritual dullness is, indeed, an "infirmity" in prayer.

Wandering Thoughts, or inability to center and fix our minds upon God and spiritual things, this, also, is a Christian "infirmity" in prayer.

The best of Christians are sometimes greatly tried in this respect in prayer. In their devotions they are troubled with the most worldly and frivolous thoughts. In vain they seek to gather them in and hold them down to communion with God. Their minds seem scarcely their own. They have no mastery over them. They are like the eyes of a fool, wandering to the ends of the earth. The moment they go to their knees, all the vanities of the week, all the cares of business, all the occurrences of society, all the experiences of the family, come trooping in pictures before their mental vision; and sometimes, even when petitions for the most stupendous blessings are being offered by others in the religious assembly, or even, perhaps, by themselves, even then, possibly, their minds are swarming with a whole multitude of idle and vagrant thoughts.

We all, as Christians, know, I presume, what this sorrowful infirmity in prayer is, and we all, no doubt, have often, in our devotions, suffered from it.

Impatience in prayer is another of our "infirmities."

The Hottentot beats his idol, we are told, when he fails in his supplications. He thinks he should at once receive the very thing for which he has asked. Are we not all, in our prayers, somewhat in spirit like him? Is it not our "infirmity" soon to become impatient, and chafe under the divine delay, and indulge in an unsubmissive and querulous spirit, if God does not at once answer our petitions? Is there not often a lack of proper resignation to the will of

God in regard to how and when our prayers shall be answered? Is there not often an absence of that sweet, quiet, truthful resting upon God, and cheerful leaving of all to Him, which there should be? Yes; this, too, we must confess, is one of our "infirmities" in prayer.

Irreverence is another such "infirmity."

We often, in prayer, fail to stand in awe before God as we should, and revere and adore Him as His infinite greatness and glory merit. We think of Him too much as though He were a mere man, like ourselves. This, too, is one of our "infirmities" in prayer.

But there is, also, an infirmity, often, of utterance in our prayers.

Our prayers often cling to our tongues. We lack power to express our devotions. The gift of utterance, much as we may at other times have possessed it, seems now to have departed from us. Our speech is stammering and hesitating and confused and vague and broken. Our words fail to say what our hearts feel. We beat the air. We pray neither with comfort to ourselves nor edification to others.

This, also, is an "infirmity" of God's people in prayer; and none know its bitterness better than do those upon whom is laid the duty of frequently leading in prayer in the public devotions of God's people.

All these are our "infirmities," as Christians, in prayer.

II. But Notice, Now, the Pericous Fact That the Holy Spirit Helps Us in These Infirmities in Prayer.

"Likewise, also, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we

ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered."

The word translated "helpeth" means to help with us, that is, to come to our assistance, while we are doing what we can; helps us in prayer, as we would help one who was trying to lift a burden, by adding or joining our strength to his, and thus, with him, lifting it. Thus the Holy Spirit "helps" us in prayer. He sees us in our efforts to worship and pray aright. He sees the "infirmities" under which we labor in prayer. He sees our spiritual struggles to rise above and over-come these infirmities. And He comes, with His divine aid, to our assistance, joins His strength with ours, and helps us to pray. He does not Himself actually do our praying for us; He only helps us while we faithfully try to pray: bestirs Himself in our hearts, stirring us to bestir ourselves, and then bestirring Himself with us. He first moves us to pray, and we pray. He helps us to pray.

But how, let us ask more particularly, does the Holy Spirit help our "infirmities" in prayer?

He "helps" us, I answer, in many and various ways. By working in us a deep sense of our spiritual wants; by recalling to our minds and giving us a clear insight into the promises and teachings of God's word; by creating faith in our hearts in the promises of that word; by moving us to plead those promises, and rest upon them as a sure ground of hope that God will hear our supplications; by stirring up our desires into intensity and earnestness for the blessings for which we pray; giving us comfort and joy in prayer; by filling us with reverence for God, child-like submission and resignation to His

decisions with regard to answering our prayers, filial boldness and confidence toward Him, and all the graces needed to make us and our prayers acceptable to Him; by showing us, through the word, our sins, and thus furnishing us with matter for confession in prayer; by showing us our wants, and thus giving us matter for petition; by showing us our many mercies and blessings, and thus giving us matter for praise and thanksgiving; by showing us our necessities, and the necessities of the Church and the world, and thus furnishing us with matter for supplication and intercession; and, above all, by showing us Christ as our all-sufficient Savior, and the infinite love of God offered to us poor sinners in and through Christ, and thus giving us matter for trust, a solid ground upon which to rest our faith and confidence and hope. By quickening our affections; by enlarging our desires; by silencing our fears; by dispelling our darkness; by brightening our hopes; by inflaming our zeal; by sharpening our spiritual perceptions; by deepening our love; by augmenting our faith; by purifying our characters; by inspiring us with courage; by filling us with holy spirituality and fervency and unction; by an uplifting of our souls into the likeness and fellowship of God Himself.

Thus, in all these many phases of His office work, does the Holy Spirit "help" our "infirmities" in prayer. He does it in our hearts, by and through His own inspired word. "He maketh intercession for the saints, or rather, in the saints, according to the will or word of God." The Spirit in the heart never contradicts the Spirit in the word. And hence all desires or doctrines or religions which are con-

trary to the written word of God, the Bible, do not, we may rest assured, come from the Spirit of God, but are only of man.

May the Holy Spirit ever be our divine Teacher in prayer. May He help our "infirmities." May He ever be the divine Intercessor within us, as Christ, in heaven, is the divine Intercessor for us. May He so lift us up into the life and power of a true fellowship and communion with God, making us so strong in the Lord, filling us with such mighty faith, such longings after angelic purity, such delight in heavenly things, such power of intercession, such yearnings and aspirations after God, that every prayer we offer may be a true prayer, and bring down, in answer, God's blessing upon us!

XIX.

THREE IN ONE.

Trinity Sunday

COLLECT.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us, Thy servants, grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the Eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; we beseech Thee, that Thou wouldst keep us steadily in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

XIX.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

II Corinthians, xiii:14.

TODAY is what is called in the Christian, or Church year, "Trinity Sunday"; the day upon which the Church gives special consideration to the doctrine of the triune character and work of the Godhead: joining with the song of the Cherubim and Seraphim in singing the Trisagion: "Holy, Holy, Holy, art Thou, Lord God Almighty."

This doctrine of the Trinity, or the doctrine that God is one and yet three—one in essence and yet three in person—is the faith of the orthodox Christian Church of all lands and denominations; and with the ancient Christian Church, the whole Church, today, of all countries, in the symbol of the "Nicene Creed," confesses her faith in three persons in the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; three persons, but one God.

That this doctrine is a mystery, that we can not comprehend or understand it, that it is entirely above the apprehension of our human reason, is readily admitted by all who hold or believe it. Hence, Christians do not profess to understand it. They simply believe it; they accept it because, as they fully believe, God, in His Word, declares it.

For this glorious and blessed truth of the Trinity we are entirely indebted to revelation. Reason does not teach it. As Martensen has tersely said: "Not even the possibility of this mystery can be obtained from the light of nature."

And yet, whilst this doctrine of the Trinity is above reason, so that even after it is revealed reason can not fully comprehend it, it is yet not contrary to reason. For, reason can not disprove it. All that reason can do is to say: "It is a doctrine above my grasp: it lies beyond the domain of my light and experience: I am incompetent to sit in judgment on it; it may be true, for I can not prove it false; and hence, if God's Word declares it true, against all to the contrary that I can advance, it is true." This is all that reason can honestly say against the doctrine.

In teaching the doctrine of the "Trinity," or that God is one, and yet, at the same time, three, Christians do not teach that God is "one" and "three" in the same sense. On the contrary, they teach and hold that God is "one" in one sense or relation, and "three" in another sense or relation. That is, He is one in His essence, in His divine nature, in the substance of His being. But, in another sense, that is, in His person, He is three: one God but three persons. Just as with regard to a "triangle": in one sense, that is, with reference to it as a whole, you say it is "one," namely, one triangle; but, in another sense, that is, with reference to its sides, or its angles, its separate parts, you say it is a "trinity," for it has three sides and three angles: a trinity in unity. So, also, with reference to the trinity of body, soul and spirit in man. In one sense man is a unit, and in another sense he is a trinity.

But I will not attempt to elucidate this doctrine of the Trinity. I will not try to explain what is manifestly inexplicable. The doctrine of the Trinity is simply an insoluble mystery, before which the wisdom of the wisest is a thing of naught. It is wholly beyond our power of understanding. God does not ask us to understand it. He simply declares it as a fact, and calls upon us to believe it. And is not this, also, after all, just what we might anticipate? Is it reasonable to expect that we, with our limited faculties and powers of apprehension, should be able to understand the nature of God? In the nature of the case, could it be expected that we, who are finite, should know Him, in the mode of His being, who is infinite? Is it not reasonable to suppose that the being of God would be a mystery: the mystery, indeed, of all mysteries? Certainly!

But what, let us now ask, is the proof by which we establish this doctrine of threefoldness in the Godhead—a divine "triad" or "trinity" in a divine unity?

I remark,

I. That. Already in a Vague Way, Universal Tradition Teaches This Doctrine of the Trinity.

It is really astonishing how traces and expressions of this doctrine of the Trinity may be found among almost, if not all, the nations of the earth, even the least civilized and cultured. The Hindoos, for example, from the most remote antiquity, have held to a "triad" in the divine nature: the names of the three persons in their Godhead being "Brahma, Vishnu, Siva." The Persians, also, especially in the Zendavesta of Zoroaster, expressed this belief in a "trini-

ty": having three persons in their Godhead, one of them a supreme being, and two subordinate beings. The Egyptians, also, held the belief of a "triad," and represented it on the doors of their temples by three figures; and represented it also in their temples and elsewhere by the symbol of an equi-lateral triangle: the three sides indicating the three persons: their equal lengths the co-equality of the three persons, and their junction the unity of these three persons in one Godhead. This "triangle," also, was a Hebrew or Jewish emblem of the Godhead; and is now often thus used, also indicative of the Trinity, in the frescoing and architecture of our Christian churches. Even among the Indians of our own country there are traditions of this doctrine: one being, that before the Creation three great spirits existed, all of whom were employed in creating man.

And thus, if time allowed, I might multiply quotations; for learned men have collected them by the hundred, showing that some intimations of a knowledge of the "Trinity" are to be found among all nations, however widely they may have been separated from each other both by space and time.

But how came they all to such a belief? That one nation should have stumbled upon it, might be allowed; but here are nations, many in number, and remote from each other in every possible respect, who thus hold it. Surely such a belief could not have sprung up among all these merely by chance. On the contrary, this common or universal tradition of the Trinity can be explained only by supposing that this was the original faith of mankind; that God, in the beginning, revealed Himself as the Triune God; that the different nations of the earth, as

they sprung up, each carried with them this triune conception of God, and still, although dim and perverted, hold and teach it as part of their religious belief.

Tradition, then, or the common existence of this idea of trinity in the Godhead, is a strong indirect proof of the truth of the doctrine.

But, as the highest and clearest source of proof, we turn, of course, to the word of God, and here, I now remark,

II. There is Found a Clear Declaration of This Doctrine or Fact of the Trinity.

We here find it taught, first, by assumption.

The Bible assumes this existence of "Three Persons" in the Godhead as an admitted fact; just as it thus assumes the existence of God. The Bible, as you know, never stops to say that there is a God, or to prove that there is. But, right in the very first verse, assuming His existence, says: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." And thus, also, as an admitted fact, it assumes this triune nature of God; this threefold conception of the Godhead, running, like a thread, throughout its entire contents, from Genesis to Revelation.

And hence, also, even if there were not a single passage in the Bible, in itself expressly and distinctly teaching it, it would yet, in this Biblical assumption of it, in this general Biblical conception of God, be clearly taught.

The Bible, in the first place, throughout, assumes and teaches the unity of God. That is, that there is but one living and true God. "The Lord our God is

one Lord." "I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have no other gods before Me." "I am the First, and I am the Last, and beside Me there is no God." "There is none other God." And thus in many places.

But, whilst it thus teaches that God is one, it equally and everywhere gives proof that He is also three, that is, that in this one God there are three distinct and separate persons: each in divine nature equal to the other; each God, because the absolute deity, the essential essence of the Godhead, is common to each. The Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Ghost is God. Divine titles, divine attributes, divine works, divine worship, all are ascribed equally to each. Each is continually spoken of, and each continually speaks, as a distinct person. The Father, for example, says "I"; the Son says "I"; the Spirit says "I." The Father says "Thou" to the Son; and the Son says "Thou" to the Father; and both the Father and the Son say "He" and "Him" of the Holy Ghost. The Father, it is said, "loves the Son"; and the Son "loves" the Father; and the Spirit testifies of the Son. The Father "sends" the Son; and the Father and the Son send the Spirit. The Father operates through the Son; and the Father and Son operate through the Spirit. According to the Bible, the Father created the world, the Son created the world, and the Spirit created the world. The Father preserves all things; the Son upholds all things, and the Spirit is the source of all life.

We, therefore, clearly see that personality is distinctively ascribed to each one of this Trinity. Personality, however, involves individual intelligence,

will, freedom, self-existence, and these are attributed equally to each, as, for example, exhibited in the use of the personal pronouns; the application of personal qualities; the performance of personal offices and work; the susceptibility of being personally sinned against and of being personally worshipped. Thus, throughout all the Bible, from beginning to end, whilst assuming, and repeatedly declaring the unity of the Godhead; that is, that God is one, not three or many; it, at the same time, all along, assumes and declares also, that this one God exists in trinity, in three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal, divine persons, designated as the "Father," as the "Son," and as the "Holy Ghost;" and these three, owing to their holding in common the infinity and absoluteness of the divine nature, are moved by one determining will in perfect unity of purpose.

But, it is not merely by assumption and general statements, the legitimate outgrowth of an eternal fact, that the Bible so plainly teaches this doctrine of the trinity, for it also teaches this doctrine in direct assertions, or in most positive declarations.

The passages of Scripture in which it is clearly implied and taught are many. I can barely enumerate some of them.

It is remarkable, for example, that in the very first verse of the Bible, we have evident reference to the trinity: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Now, the Hebrew language has three numbers, the singular, the dual and the plural; so that when one person is spoken of, it is in the singular number: where two, in the dual; and where more than two, in the plural. And now what is noteworthy is, that the name of God, in the first verse,

is expressed, not in the singular, nor in the dual, but in the plural; and this plural name has a verb in the singular, so that literally it would read: "Gods created (creates) the heaven and the earth." And this strange form is used by Moses about five hundred times in speaking of God. And now shall we say, that the Spirit of God led him to use this remarkable and ungrammatical form just by chance, or without meaning? By no means! But there is here already, right in the beginning of the Bible, a revelation of, or intended reference to, this doctrine of the trinity: the plural form of the noun expressing more than one person in the Godhead, while the singular verb denotes their unity in action, so that a trinity in unity is intimated in the very first verse of the Bible.

And so again in the verse, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," the same truth is taught; for, if there were but one person in the Godhead, the proper form of expression would have been, "I will make man in my image and after my likeness."

And thus, also, in still other passages, there is proof of this doctrine. Those, for example, which speak of the "Angel of Jehovah" as distinct from Jehovah; of the Spirit moving upon the face of the waters, of the Spirit not always striving with man, of the "word," of the "wisdom of God"—all of which clearly intimate and necessarily imply this existence of persons in the Godhead, or this trinity in the divine nature.

Practically we have this doctrine or fact of the trinity presented to us in one view at the baptism of Jesus, where each of the three persons is manifested: the Father addressing the Son, and the Holy Ghost,

distinct from both, descending from heaven upon the Son.

Take also the high-priestly benediction: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace." In this very three fold mention, as well as in the peculiarity of the form used—in this, I say, the truth of a trinity is again underlying; and especially is this evident when we remember that the priest, as we are told, on pronouncing this benediction, lifted up his hands, closing all but three fingers, to denote this very doctrine of a trinity in the Godhead, or, at least, a certain distinctive, peculiar, mysterious perfection of the deity, which now, since the manifestation of "the fullness of the Godhead" in the person of Jesus, stands forth revealed.

And thus in numerous other passages. In the formula of baptism, for example, there is distinct proof of it. "Go ye, therefore," said Jesus to His apostles, "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And so in "the Apostolic Benediction," announced as our text, there is the same declaration of this truth: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." In the discourse of Jesus, recorded in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of John, our Lord speaks to and of the Father, and promises to send the Spirit to teach, guide and comfort His disciples. Take also I Corinthians, xii:4-6, where the apostle speaks of diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; of

diversity of administration, but the same Lord; and of diversities of operations, but the same God.

Thus, by numerous passages, both in the Old Testament and in the New, is this doctrine of the trinity in the Godhead clearly and positively declared, so that no one, who, with unbiased mind, studies them, can, if open to unprejudiced testimony and conviction, possibly doubt that this is the scriptural teaching on this subject.

And now, let no one think that this doctrine of the Trinity, which we have thus together considered, is a mere unprofitable speculation; that it matters not to us whether there be thus three persons or only one person in the Godhead. On the contrary, let us all know that every doctrine of God's Word is important and profitable; and especially so is this doctrine. In the very highest sense is this both a practical and a fundamental article of our Christian faith. Deny or reject this, and you remove the very cornerstone of our Christian creed; you pluck out the very keystone in the grand arch of our salvation. If this doctrine be not true, then Christ Jesus was not God; and then, if Christ be not God, was His atonement for our sins no atonement; and then, also, is our faith in Him, as our Savior, all groundless and vain. If not also God, then He was a mere creature; and all that He has taught, or done, or suffered for us possesses no more merit, as a ground of our justification before God, than if taught, or done, or suffered by ourselves.

And so, also, if this doctrine of the Trinity be not true, then is there no such thing as an inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures; no such thing as regeneration; no such thing as sanctification; no such thing

as divine spiritual aid and guidance in prayer; for all these are expressly declared in Scripture to be the work of the Holy Ghost as a divine being. But if this doctrine be not true, then there is no such being as a divine Holy Ghost.

And so, once more, if this doctrine be not true, then our entire Christian faith and order of worship are also false and overthrown; our baptism, for example, for we are baptized into the name of the three persons of the Godhead; our Lord's Supper, for in it, guided by the Spirit, we commemorate the atoning death of the everlasting Son of the Father, and feed upon Him as the bread of heaven; our creed, for in it, each Lord's Day, we unitedly declare that we "believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord," and "in the Holy Ghost"; our benediction, for in it the minister says: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all"; and our doxology, for in it, with united and gladsome hearts, we waft heavenward our praise, singing:

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

Thus, at the very center and heart of all our faith and worship, of all our Christian life and joy and hope, lies this doctrine of the trinity in unity in the ever blessed Godhead. Deny this, and you deny all that is most precious. Rob us of this, and you rob us of the most essential parts, of the very foundation of the Christian system.

Cling, then, my hearers, to this cardinal doctrine of the trinity. Retain it, as exceedingly valuable, in your Christian creed. Declare it in the sacrament. Pronounce it in the benediction. Sing it with grateful feeling in the doxology. Cherish it with deep reverence in your heart. And so live, under its benign influence, that you may, at last, join with angels and redeemed saints in the "Trisagion," or "Thrice-Holy," in the eternal worship of this triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in the church triumphant above.

XX.

THE TRIUNE COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH.

Trinity Sunday

COLLECT.

Almighty and Gracious God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast commanded us to pray that Thou wouldst send forth laborers into Thy harvest: of Thine infinite mercy give us true teachers and ministers of Thy word, and put Thy saving gospel in their hearts and on their lips, that they may truly fulfill Thy command, and preach nothing contrary to Thy holy word; that we, being warned, instructed, nurtured, comforted and strengthened by Thy heavenly word, may do those things which are well-pleasing to Thee, and profitable to us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XX.

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

MATTHEW, xxviii:19, 20.

OUR text is a commission given to the church in the name of the Trinity: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The duty here laid upon the church, in the triune name, by the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, to evangelize and save the world.

This preaching of the gospel and this administration of the sacraments require a qualified and appointed ministry, a body of men fitted effectively to do this special work of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. Such men, originally were the apostles, to whom personally and directly the Savior here gave this commission. Since the days of the apostles, the men called to this work of thus preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments are the ordained or commissioned ministers of the church.

Regarding this last commission of Christ as a commission given to the church, in which she is specially bidden to preach the gospel to all the nations of the earth, and make disciples of all nations by teaching them the gospel and by baptizing

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, it is evidently, also, in order that she may successfully execute the commission, and fulfill the high duty thus laid upon her by her departing Lord, practically and really, a command to her, by the Savior to furnish herself with a properly-qualified ministry and in sufficient numbers, through whom to execute the commission, whose office work it shall be, like the apostles, to teach the gospel and to administer the sacraments, and thus evangelize and save the world.

So, at least, I purpose now to interpret and apply this triune commission: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy," asking you to consider with me: The duty of the Church to furnish herself with an adequate gospel ministry.

I take the position that it lies within the power, and hence is also the duty of the Church, to provide herself with such a ministry: a godly and educated ministry, a ministry sufficiently numerous, also, not only to fill her pulpits and minister to her own immediate wants, in Christian lands, but sufficient, also, to carry the gospel to all heathen and unchristian nations of all the world; and that to provide herself with such a ministry is, therefore, her duty.

I. The Ground of this Duty Arises, First, from the Fact, so Clearly Taught Us in the Scriptures, that the Preaching of the Gospel, by a Rightly-Qualified and Ordained Ministry, is the One Chief and Especial Instrumentality which God has Instituted as the Means by Which the Kingdom of Christ is to be Perpetuated and Extended in the

World, and by Which Men, in All Ages, are to be Converted and Saved.

There are, of course, other subordinate agencies which He employs for this purpose. But it still remains true that the main or principal means is preaching: the proclaiming of divine truth by the voice of a truly-called and ordained ministry.

Thus it has always been. Preaching has always been God's chief instrumentality by which to maintain His cause and carry on His work in the world. During the Old-Testament Dispensation, from time to time, He raised up "prophets" to proclaim His will: men who were the divinely-called and ordained preachers of their age, inspired and commissioned, not only to prophesy and foretell future events, but whose especial work was to preach God's Word, to announce His message, to show the people God's requirements from them, to rebuke them for their sins, to exhort them to repentance, to declare to them the coming of the Messiah, to urge them, in every possible way, to obedience and holiness and salvation.

And we all know how successful, also, in this work, these "prophets" often were: the whole nation, at times, being moved by their appeals to repentance, and being reclaimed from idolatry and formality to the pure worship and love of God.

Besides, as early already as the days of Samuel, "schools of prophets," or seminaries, for the training of men for the prophetic office, were established, out from which men went everywhere over the land to proclaim to the people the will of God.

When our Savior came into the world, and estab-

lished the New-Testament order or dispensation, preaching was again the chief agency employed. John's ministry was conspicuously a ministry of preaching. "In those days came John, the Baptist, preaching, and saying: Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The ministry of Jesus was, also, pre-eminently a preaching ministry. Immediately after His baptism it is written of Him: "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Again we read: "Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom." Again: "And he said unto them: Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth." And again we read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Thus was the preaching of the Gospel the chief feature and work of the ministry of our Lord. And so when the seventy disciples were sent out, their commission was to go into every city, and preach: "The kingdom of God is come nigh to you." This, too, was the commission given to the twelve, when they were sent forth: They were to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. On the day of Pentecost preaching was again God's chosen agency. It was Peter's sermon, accompanied by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, that, on that memorable day, reached and won to Christ three thousand souls that had been dead in sin. And so, also, through all the apostolic age. Whilst the apostles, it is true, possessed special supernatural gifts, and wrought frequent miracles, in evidence

of the divine character of Christianity, it nevertheless was not through these gifts, nor because of these miracles, but it was by the means or use of preaching, the public vocal witnessing for Jesus, the simple, earnest telling of the story of salvation, that men's hearts were melted, and that they were led to embrace Christ as their Savior. And so, also, has it been, in the entire history of the Christian Church, ever since. Preaching, the preaching of the pure Gospel, by renewed and holy and consecrated men, an ordained, spiritually-minded ministry, this is the agency, all along the Christian centuries, which God has recognized and honored as the one supremely efficient instrumentality for the salvation of souls. It was by his preaching that Chrysostom, "the golden-mouthed," in the fourth century, rolled back the tide of Arianism and saved for the Church the pure orthodox faith as it is in Christ. It was by his bold, earnest, evangelical preaching that our immortal Luther, in the sixteenth century, dispelled the midnight moral darkness of "the Middle Ages," broke the spiritual despotism of the papacy, and gave back again to the world the long-lost light and liberty of the blessed Gospel. It was by means of their preaching, in the eighteenth century, that John Wesley and George Whitfield awoke all England and America from their spiritual sleep of formalism, and stirred the Church into pentecostal life and activity for Christ. And thus, in thousands upon thousands of instances, preaching has evidenced itself to be God's own instituted, recognized, honored and effectual agency by which to perpetuate and maintain and extend in the world the kingdom of Christ, His Son. "Faith cometh by hearing,"

says the apostle. But hearing implies speaking; and speaking implies a speaker, a preacher. And that same apostle, himself the greatest of earth's preachers, has also declared that "when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

This, then, is the first ground for the duty which I am now urging: Preaching, by properly qualified men, is God's appointed and chosen and demanded agency by which to perpetuate the Church and evangelize the world; and hence, to furnish herself with a ministry, capable to preach, is the pre-eminent duty of the Church, both as an obligation to herself and for the glory of God.

And this, let me here add, is the great practical distinction between Romanism and Protestantism. Protestantism makes much of preaching; Romanism but little. Rome exalts the altar; Protestantism gives prominence to the pulpit. Rome says to the Church: "Fill the order of the priesthood with men to offer sacrifices and to mediate between God and man." Protestantism says: "Send forth men to preach the Word, to announce the Gospel, to call men to repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

II. This Duty Arises, Also, Secondly, from the Fact that the Church Alone, Under God, Can Provide Herself with a Ministry, and that if She Fails to Thus Provide for Herself, She Will Necessarily be Without a Ministry.

It is self-evident, in the very nature of the case, that the ministry of the Church must come from the

Church, and must be raised up and trained and sent forth into the work by the Church. The Church, evidently, can not look to the world to furnish her with the ministry she needs. Nor can she look to the State for her ministers. The State is not the authority to determine for the Church who shall constitute her ministry. The Church, while under the civil and legal protection of the State, is yet, as a spiritual organization, and as the "Body of Christ," existing for purely moral and spiritual ends, wholly separate from and independent of the State. And hence the State has no right whatever to assume jurisdiction over aught relating to the internal or moral and religious life of the Church. And hence has no right to appoint the ministry of the Church. Besides, the ministry which the State would furnish her is not such a ministry as she ought to have and needs. The State, therefore, I repeat, can not and ought not to give to the Church her ministry.

And it may also be reverently yet added that the Church cannot depend, exclusively and directly, upon God to raise up for her the ministry she needs. As already remarked, God, in the beginning of the history of the Church, because then there was need for His so doing, did Himself call and place men in the Gospel ministry. That need, however, no longer exists. The ability to supply herself with a suitable and sufficient ministry God has now placed within the Church herself; and He, therefore, now, also, expects her to provide the needed supply. He has given her the men: hundreds and thousands of young men, talented, converted, pious, capable young men: young men in every way capable of being fitted for eminent usefulness in the work of the

ministry. He has given her, also, an abundance of wealth with which to educate and prepare these young men for the ministry.

Dr. Dorchester, who is recognized as an authority in the line of ecclesiastical statistics and finances, has, from reliable data, shown that, in 1887, the aggregate population of our country was about sixty millions, and that one-fifth of this population, or twelve millions, were communicant members of Protestant churches. And he has also shown that the aggregate wealth of the nation, in 1887, was sixty billions of dollars, or one billion of dollars for each million of population; and that one-fifth of these sixty billions of wealth, or twelve billion dollars, is in the hands of the twelve millions of members who make up our various Protestant churches in this country. Think of that: twelve billions of dollars, placed by God, as a trust, to be used for His glory, and for the spread of His kingdom, in the hands of the American Protestant Christian Church. What a power for good! What a capacity for all needed Christian work!

And God has also, by His providence, given the Church numerous and most efficient educational facilities: Christian academies, colleges, theological seminaries, Christian teachers and Christian literature: all, in a word, necessary to secure to herself, in her ministry, the best possible culture, and solid and able scholarship.

Thus the possibility of securing for herself an adequate ministry, adequate both in number and competency, is providentially lodged, I hold, in the Church herself. The spring of this river of life, "with which to make glad the city of God," is right

in her own bosom. The rod with which to divide the sea and strike the rock, and lead out God's emancipated people through the wilderness into the Promised Land, is divinely placed right in her own hands. And she but needs to use what God has thus given her, and she may, at once, have all the ministry, both in quantity and quality, she wants. The miracle of supply is, indeed, already wrought; the water is already changed into wine; and all that is now needed is for the Church to hear and obey her divine Lord's command: "Draw out now and bear unto the governor of the feast."

This self-recourse, then, of the Church, in the present day, this ability, granted her as a talent or trust by the Savior, of thus, out of her own self, providing a ministry adequate for the work both of edifying herself and of evangelizing the world: this constitutes a high ground of obligation, and this imposes upon her, as an imperative and immediate duty, the furnishing of herself with such a ministry as she needs.

III. This Duty Bases Itself, However, Also Upon the Higher Ground of Christian Gratitude.

What is, I may ask, the Church of today but the inheritor of innumerable blessings which have been secured and transmitted to her, down along the succeeding centuries, by all the piety and toil and sacrifice and suffering and martyrdom and death, by all the liberality and study and scholarship and culture and high thought and contest for the truth, of the historic Church in all the past? Ours, indeed, is the heritage of the Christian ages: the rich fruit-

age of all past saintly planting; the abundant reaping of all past tearful and faithful sowing, the legacy to us of all God's people, in all the centuries since the very beginning in the world of the Church. As Paul expresses it: "Upon us the ends of the world are come."

And especially is all this true with regard to the gospel ministry of the past. They were our ministry as well as the ministry of their immediate generation, and of those whom they directly served. They preached and prayed and wrote and studied and traveled and lived and died for us, as well as for those who then, in their lifetime, lived with them here on earth. Their influence has come down in blessings upon us. Their achievements, for Christ and the truth, for righteousness and justice and purity and faith and love, live on in benedictions in these after ages in which we now live. We sit, today, under the gospel trees of their planting, and pluck from those trees the golden fruit of life and salvation. For us Enoch walked with God, and Moses trod the wilderness, and Elijah stood on Carmel, and David sang, and Isaiah breathed his prophecies, and John thundered God's wrath against sin, and Jesus lived and taught and died and rose, and Paul preached and wrote, and Luther championed the truth, and Calvin expounded the divine Word, and Bunyan dreamed, and Edwards thought, and Muhlenberg and other fathers of our Lutheran Church in America crossed the sea, and here lived and labored in laying the foundations: for us, I say, all these and all others, in the whole long line of God's ministry in the past, for us they all lived; and we have, today, in gospel blessings, what we have,

because they lived and did and were what they were.

How great, then, our debt of gratitude! How much we have received: how much we owe!

And how shall we repay all this service of the Church and ministry of the past for us? How liquidate this precious, holy debt? I know of but one way. And that is, by abundantly perpetuating this line of faithful and godly ministers: by giving to the generations after us what those before us have thus given us: thus we can repay it, thus only can we repay it.

And thus ought we, also, to repay it; and if, indeed, we are Christians, and worthy of the Church that has lived before us, and worthy, especially, of the Christ who died for us, and whose we profess to be, thus also will we repay it.

IV. But There is Another Consideration. This Duty of the Church to Furnish Herself with an Adequate and Properly-qualified Ministry Grounds Itself Also Upon the Fact that the Character, and the Very Perpetuity of the Church, Demands Her Possession of Such a Ministry.

The Church, in her spiritual life and growth and usefulness, always has been as was her ministry. A numerous, an educated, a pious, earnest, thoroughly evangelical ministry has always also produced a growing, prosperous, powerful, godly Church. And so the converse of all this is also true: a venal, ignorant, unspiritual, incompetent, dead ministry has invariably lowered the standard both of the knowledge and piety in the Church. "Like priests, like people."

The future, therefore, of the Church, of the Church here in our land, in the next generation or next century, will all be determined by the character and number of the ministry which we, now, in this generation and century, call out, educate, place in our pulpits, and thus furnish and transmit, as a legacy, to it. The preachers, under whose ministry your children and mine and our children's children shall sit, and their characters be molded, and their religious faith be determined, and their eternal destiny be decided, are the preachers whom we now raise up and furnish to them. Or, if now we provide no ministry for them at all, if through our indifference or illiberality we fail to educate and provide for them a godly ministry, then, let me assure you, the world will provide a ministry for them, then Satan will furnish them with preachers, then infidelity will be their teacher, and irreligion and atheism their creed, and eternal death the doom of many: but the blood of their souls will the just God of us all require at our hands.

V. I Add Only One Motive More. This Duty Grounds Itself, I Yet Remark, as an Especial Obligation, Upon the Fact that the Age in Which We Live Especially Requires that the Church Should Have a Numerous, Educated and Godly Ministry.

It is an age, first of all, of great religious possibilities, of large Christian opportunities, of wonderful openings for the Church into moral harvest fields white and ripe for the gospel sickle.

This is more than ever true right here in our own land, in view of the enormous foreign immigration

which is daily pouring in upon our shores from almost every nation upon all the face of the earth. And especially true is all this to us, as Lutherans, in the fact that a very large proportion of this incoming population is, by birth and affinity, Lutheran.

But especially, in our day, are these openings for the gospel marked and numerous with regard to heathen lands. The once existing barriers to the gospel have, in our day, been most wonderfully broken down. Everywhere God has flung open wide doors of entrance to His Church into the heart of the once most distant and exclusive nations; and the whole wide heathen world is now accessible to her. And more: these heathen nations seem morally ready to receive the gospel. The field now, as never before, is the world. But, to avail herself of the opportunity God thus gives her, the Church needs a great increase of ministers: more men, many more: men by the thousand, missionaries who, like an army, will go out into this great harvest field, and gather these nations for Christ.

Then, too, the age in which we now live is peculiarly, as no preceding age, an age of great intellectual activity, of advanced culture and knowledge, of extensive scientific research especially. And it is an age, too, in which science is largely godless, antichristian, materialistic, assailing the bulwarks and undermining the foundations of our Christian faith. And many, especially the young, are by it led out into the midnight darkness of unbelief and death. And hence, also, now especially, is there need for a thoroughly educated ministry, a ministry familiar with all these new phases and sophistries of our modern skepticism, and able to expose its fallacies

and meet its arguments, and defend Christianity and the Church against its assaults. The time once was, in our land, when uneducated men were eminently useful, and still possibly, in some places and communities, may be. But largely that day in the history of preaching, in our land, is past. The Church now, if she would ever hold her own against all the subtle and powerful assaults upon her, and especially if she would make progress, and carry the gospel victoriously to the ends of the earth, needs a strong, scholarly, educated ministry. Piety is, of course, always the chief and essential requisite, but piety alone in the ministry is, in this day, insufficient. There must be learning with piety. There must be strength of mind, as well as goodness of heart. There must be grace, but there must also, with grace, be knowledge: knowledge sanctified and energized by the presence and power of the indwelling Holy Ghost.

This is the character, then, of the ministry which the Church, in this our day, must have if she would sustain herself in the world, and be true to the high mission with which her Lord has entrusted her.

The one, all-important question, then, which today forces itself upon the Church, is: How shall she secure to herself such a ministry?

No question of greater importance could well be asked by her. No question, relating to all the highest interests and best welfare of the Church, more earnestly demands her thought. This, in the present crisis of the Church's history, is to her the question of questions.

Let us seek, for a moment, in answer to this question, to suggest some of the many methods by which

this needed supply to the Church of a true and numerous gospel ministry may be provided.

To secure it, I suggest:

1. A revived and more deeply spiritual condition of the Church.

Here, I believe, is the primal cause of all our present difficulty in regard to this whole matter. Our churches, with rare exceptions, are, at present, in a cold and low spiritual condition. Worldliness, formality, indifference, spiritual frigidity, characterize them. They lack deep interest in divine and spiritual things, and are unconcerned about the salvation of the world or the glory of Christ. As the result, but few of the young men in the churches are moved to enter the ministry; and, sadder yet, many that come from such churches, cold and spiritually dead, come with such low type of spiritual life, with so little warmth and zeal and holiness and consecration, that it is doubtful, indeed, whether they ought to enter.

The remedy, then, I hold, must begin in the Church herself. The Church needs revival, a fresh and mighty visitation of God's spirit, a shaking off from herself of this blighting and deadening pall of worldliness that has come upon her, a rising up, in new faith and prayer and consecration and zeal, to the Lord's work. To your knees, then, O ye churches of Christ, and seek for yourselves this "power" that comes from above. Pray for a genuine spiritual revival. Then, among many other blessings, will come, also, this needed increase of a holy and consecrated ministry. For then, in all our churches, moved by love to Christ and souls, will

hundreds of our young men respond to the call, and say: "Here, Lord, am I; send me."

The answer to this question demands also:

2. That the pastors of our churches, those in the ministry, do all in their power to bring men into the ministry.

By seeking to bring their own sons into the ministry, by seeking out and speaking to the pious and talented young men and boys in their congregations to enter it, by distributing literature upon the subject, by frequently preaching upon the subject, and laying it on the hearts and consciences of their hearers, by ceasing to talk of the ministry as a hardship and a life of sacrifice, but counting it a joy and honor to be in it, and thanking God for the blessed privilege of preaching: by all these means, and by yet others, pastors may do much to persuade young men into the ministerial ranks.

3. Upon Christian parents, also, devolves a duty in regard to this matter.

That duty is, like Hannah, to offer their sons to God in the ministry. This, fathers and mothers, is your duty. Talk to your boys about the ministry. Speak to them of the honor and dignity and blessedness of the work. Tell them your desire to have them in it. Offer to educate them for it. Pray with them over it. Pray for them, asking God to accept them and lead them into the holy office. O, do, thus, what you can with your own sons to replenish the ministry, and thus, also, will many of them, I am sure, find their way into it, and in it do blessed things for Christ and His Church.

4. Our churches, as churches, have also, in this matter, a duty devolving upon them.

One duty of every church is, I believe, all the time, from her own midst, out of her own membership and Sunday school, to have one or more in training or education for the ministry. There are such churches; but there are many more that, year after year, never furnish one single candidate for the ministry. Surely, where this is the case, there has been a sad neglect by some one: by parents, by Sunday-school superintendents, by church members, by pastors. The duty, I repeat, of every church is, out of her own number of young men, to have in training one or more for the ministry. Thus the ranks of the ministry would be quickly and largely augmented.

Another method by which our churches, as churches, can aid in this work, is by cheerfully and liberally supporting our admirable system of beneficiary education. That system needs no commendation. Is is its own best commendation. Is has, for years, been a most valuable agency in furnishing the Church with a ministry, and multitudes of the best and most useful men in our ministry today could never have gotten there had it not been for the aid thus given them to prepare for it. Shame, then, on ministers who sneer at "beneficiaries," and Beneficiary Education. And shame on churches and pastors who fail to raise the small sum annually apportioned them for this noble object!

But our churches may also aid in this work by a hearty and liberal support of the institutions, the colleges and theological seminaries engaged in educating men for the ministry. These institutions are the instiutions of the Church. The Church, then, should cordially support them: by patronage, by

good words, by prayer, by interest, by liberal contribution of means.

5. Our men of large wealth have, also, in this respect a duty resting upon them.

6. And you, young men, how directly and loudly this subject appeals to you! You Christian young men, the Church needs you in the ministry! The Savior appeals to you to enter it. Heed the appeal! Respond to the call: come, enter the ranks, and join with us in seeking to win the world for Jesus Christ!

XXI.

THE TABLE THAT GOD SPREADS FOR MAN.

Harvest Festival

COLLECT.

Almighty God, most merciful Father, who openest Thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing: we give Thee most humble and hearty thanks that Thou hast crowned the fields with Thy blessing, and hast permitted us once more to gather in the fruits of the earth; and we beseech Thee to bless and protect the living seed of Thy word sown in our hearts, that in the plenteous fruits of righteousness we may always present to Thee an acceptable thank-offering; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

XXI

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

PSALM, xxiii:5.

THERE is something very beautiful in the conception of God, and of His relations to man, which David, here in this text, suggests. He conceives God in the relation of a great and benevolent house-father, preparing and providing for him his daily food; spreading for him, in rich abundance, the table at which he daily seats himself; getting ready and setting before him daily the provision required to satisfy his ever-returning hunger; doing for all the children of men, all over the wide earth, every year, in each returning harvest, just what Jesus, in the miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes, did once for the supply of a few thousand.

"God," he means to say, "is the bounitful provider of food for the whole human race. He is the host of all: and all are His daily guests. He is the divine Father of all; and all, as His children, daily surround His board, and partake of His bounties. 'The eyes of all wait upon Him and He gives to all their food or meat in due season; He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing.'

With the psalmist, every human being, on every part of our habitable globe, from the poles to the equator, whether it be the Esquimau feasting on his

daily meal of fish and blubber, or the Icelander on his moss bread, or the West Indian on his flour made of bananas, or the Hottentot on his bread made from the fruit of the sago tree, or the native of the Caribbee Islands on his cassava or tapioca bread, or the Europeans and American on his fine wheaten bread, all, as they daily partake thus of their different kinds of food, may look up to their one common divine Father in heaven, and say: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

This is what God has now again done for us, in the new and abundant harvest with which He has covered the earth. Again do our trees hang laden with ripe and ripening luscious fruit. Again do our fields rustle with crowded stalks of growing tasseled corn. Again from the many millions of acres of our broad land does the husbandman gather the rich harvest of the golden grain. Again our fields and barns and garners, all over our land, filled to overflowing with food for man and beast. And all is God's gift. It is all the result of the kind and gracious activity of our loving heavenly Father; laying up food for us His children; filling up His great divine larder out of which to feed His big family of more than sixty-five millions, here in our own land, during this coming year; preparing His table, for us to sit down at and eat, during these next twelve months, so that we will not want.

In our reflections on the bounteous harvest with which our earth has again been blessed, two thoughts should especially impress us, viz:

I. That no one but God could give us such a blessing as an annual harvest; and,

II. That no one but God would give it to us.

I remark, then,

I. That No One But God Could Prepare Such a Table for Man as is an Annual Harvest.

There is, in our day, a pround and boastful infidelity which, in the sacred name of science, ignores the existence and agency of a personal God; which eliminates Him from the universe which He has made, and which finds in mere "natural law," or "impersonal physical force," the cause of all effects, and the origin or source of all the changes and results which are perpetually occurring in the worlds both of mind within us and of matter around us.

But every annual harvest field, every seed of grain, every blade of grass, every bud and flower, protests, in silent eloquence, against such wicked assumption, and brands it as a lie. For, in all, when carefully examined, there is clearest possible evidence of personal and infinite intelligence: of thought, of selection, of arrangement and of adaptation, such as only an infinitely wise being like God could have exercised.

Try to realize, for a moment, what a mighty and deep thought there must have been exercised by some one before there could possibly have been a "harvest field"! Think what infinite previous wisdom it required! What wisdom it required to create the first seed of wheat, or first seed of anything! What wisdom to compose the soil of the earth of elements adapted to the seed, and arranged so as to nourish it and cause it to germinate and grow! What wisdom to create the sun and so hang it in the

heavens, and then so make our earth and fix it in its orbit, and give it its annual and diurnal revolutions, so as to produce, in their order, day and night, summer and winter, light and darkness, heat and cold, all of which are necessary in the production of a harvest! What wisdom to establish the great and wonderful meteorological laws by which clouds are formed, and rain is made to fall, and snow to blanket the earth, and dew to distil! What wisdom to so frame the seed that, when cast into the ground, it will feed upon the soil, and drink in the water and air, and burst its casement of chaff, and spring up into the new green life of the blade and shooting stalk! And then, what infinite wisdom, also, was there displayed in the construction of what is called the stem, or stalk, so slender and yet so strong, so yielding and yet so elastic and recovering: a hollow cylinder, composed largely of silica, or stone, in solution, both in form and material the very best that could possibly have been chosen! What perfect and infinite wisdom, I say, does everything connected with the production of a "harvest field," from first to last, reveal! And what infinite power, also, does it declare: power to execute what wisdom has thus planned! And what an infinite providence, also, does it not reveal; or the constant exercise of this wisdom and power, in care over the ripening grain, in keeping it amid all the dangers to which it is exposed, and in bringing it, at last, in the appointed harvest season, to perfection!

And thus, as I began to say, God is the only one who could give us an annual harvest, who could prepare a harvest table for us. No one but He can create, or produce a harvest field. No one but God

can make a single seed, or stalk of wheat, or ear of corn, or grain of rye or barley. Only God can make an apple, or pear, or cherry. Only God can make a loaf of bread. Our table is all of God's making and of God's spreading. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

But, not only is God the only being who could give us our annual harvest, but He, also, I now remark,

II. Is the Only Being Who Would Do So.

No other being would spread such a table for us as God thus annually spreads. He rises up to the largeness of His own Being, as God, in the largeness of the gift which He thus bestows upon us. He honors Himself in the magnitude of His goodness toward us His unworthy children. Only infinite love would thus annually give to man as God, in our harvests, gives. The table which He, each year, spreads before us, is, in a word, in fine keeping with the dignity and munificence and greatness of such a thing as God is. It is a table such as we might expect such a glorious Host to spread for His guests; a table such as we might expect such a great and loving Father as He is to invite us, as His children, to sit down to from day to day.

Think, for a moment, what kind of table this is to which, in the annual harvests of the earth, God invites us. Think what a wondrous board this is which He thus spreads, and covers for us with His bounty, and to which He bids us sit down. Think of it, I say.

Think of its abundance. God is no sparing giver.

He does not give with hand only half open, but wide open. He gives lavishly, bountifully, plentifully. His goodness is not dropped or slowly filtered out, but is poured out upon us. He crowns us with His loving kindness. Our cup runneth over. As the poor prodigal expressed it, in our heavenly Father's house "there is always bread enough and to spare."

It is estimated that the annual average of the wheat crop alone, throughout all the world, is, at present, fully sixteen hundred millions of bushels, or two hundred millions of bushels more than there are human beings in all the world. In our own land there was a yield, last year, of over five hundred millions of bushels of wheat; and this year there will be even more, or fully ten bushels for each man, woman and child in all the land. Is not that abundance? Is not God a good Provider? Does He not put plenty on His table for us? Are not His loaves many and large and more than enough for us all?

And then think of the variety of foods, also, with which God thus annually prepares our table for us! How richly God sets it! How tempting and choice and varied the dishes with which He spreads our board! How long and royal His divine bill of fare! What a bounteous caterer to our tastes and appetites God is! What endless variety of food He places before us, and bids us eat! Vineyard and orchard and field and garden, at His command, contribute their offerings and minister to our wants. Fruit, vegetables, grains, all are placed by Him before us as our daily diet. The peach, with its inimitable blush of beauty; the apple, with its rosy hues and juicy richness; the grape, with its delicate flavor; the melon, with all its fresh lusciousness; the

orange, with its covering of gold and fullness of nectar; the tasseled corn; the tall rye; the white, mealy potato; the golden wheat—how abundant and how varied the food He sets before us! Not one dish, but many! Profusion and variety combined! Plenty and diversity! What a table, I say! Covered with all possible kinds of food: with all the necessaries, comforts, luxuries, dainties which we could wish! What more, what better, could we possibly have? How good He is! Over fourteen hundred millions of children has He here on this earth of His. And they all have good appetites; they all become hungry; they all need feeding three times a day; they are all good eaters. But our heavenly Father feeds them all. He is good.

But especially does this goodness of God, in thus preparing a "table" for man, appear when we think who man is; who the guests are for whom He provides all this abundant and varied and costly bounty. What is man whom God so constantly and so royally thus feeds? What is his relation to God? How does he appreciate or receive all this divine goodness?

Alas! you all know! Many millions, in heathen lands, scarce conceive the hand that thus feeds them, but bow, in ignorance, to gods carved by their own skill. And, in our own land, and in other Christian lands, possessing a true knowledge of Him, even in these, how imperfect and undeserving of such divine bounty, are even the best of His children! How cold the gratitude for such rich goodness of even the most grateful! How little the appreciation; how disproportioned the love; how meager and reluctant the services in return! And then, what millions of

mankind there are who daily sit down to this "table," which God thus so plentifully provides for them, and yet never even think of Him as the Giver; never lift an emotion of gratitude to Him in return; never voice a word of thanksgiving and praise for what He thus bestows! Yea; what multitudes, who thus daily sit at His table, and eat His bread, and live on His daily bounty, yet even deny His existence, curse His name, defy His authority, withhold from Him His glory! What thousands of mouths, that God is filling with the choicest of daily food, make return of His goodness only in blasphemies and oaths! What tongues, that daily taste His goodness, yet daily only revile His name! What lips, that daily drink in His loving gifts, which yet daily only speak forth their hatred of His being and power and glory! And yet God keeps on feeding them all. There is still a place at His table for them all. He drives none away. He withholds their daily bread from none. As Jesus expresses it: "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Would any other being than God do all this? Is not the gift of a harvest to man an amazing exhibition of the kindness of God toward Him; of His infinite patience and forbearance and longsuffering and goodness and love toward Him? Next to the very cross of Christ itself, the highest possible expression of His love, what could more vividly express the infinite love of God toward man, than this ceaseless bestowal of his daily food, this unfailing creation for him of his annual harvest, this preparing of his "table" for him, year after year, notwithstanding all his unworthiness of it? Yes! These harvest fields of the world

all say: "God is good." Every barrel of flour vocalizes the truth, and re-echoes the note, and sings, "God is good." And every loaf of bread, as we place it on our tables, or lift is to our lips, as it were, looks up with a smile into our face and repeats the melody and sings into our souls the divine refrain, "God is good."

"God is love, His mercy brightens
All the path in which we rove;
Bliss He wakes, and woe He lightens,
God is wisdom, God is love."

But I now close with a few practical lessons drawn from the subject which we have thus been considering.

(*a*) This truth which we have been considering reveals to us the Common or Universal Fatherhood of God.

He that feeds me feeds also every other human being on all the face of the earth. He that thus gives you your daily bread and prepares for you a "table" at which you may satisfy your hunger, does the same, also, for all the millions of earth. He is the one common divine Father of all. All are alike His children. One is as dear to Him as another; all sit down together, at the same "table," and He calls one His child as well as another. He is the Father of us all.

(*b*) This truth reveals to us, also, the fact of the close Common Brotherhood of the whole human race.

Sitting, as the whole human family all over the globe thus daily does, at the same "table"; fed by the bounty of the same divine Father; eating from the same board; all equally needy and equally de-

pendent and equally unworthy; having nothing but what He gives us; what an impressive exhibition of the common brotherhood of our whole human race; what a stamp of natural human equality, and of universal blood relationship between men of every nationality, color, clime, condition, character, this conception of our text, that God daily prepares a table for all, suggests! Yes! The race is a brotherhood, one family, eating at the same "table," with the same divine Father at the head of it, who gives to each his portion as, in His wisdom, He deems best.

And hence, being thus a universal brotherhood, and all having thus one and the same divine Father, we yet learn the very practical lesson:

(*c*) That we should ever be kind and mutually helpful, also, one to another.

We should treat each other as brothers. We should love each other as members of one family, as all the children of the same father. Look at that family table: father, mother, brothers and sisters, all seated together around the same domestic board! What pleases the parents better, or what, in itself, is more becoming, than to see those children kindly and unselfishly helping each other, and sharing with each other the bounty which parental labor and love have provided! And so, I would ask, what pleases more our common heavenly Father, the divine Father of all the millions of earth, than to see His children kind and helpful one to another; sharing and equalizing among each other the bounties which He has bestowed. And what is more becoming than for children of the same family, as we all are, so to do. God's "table" is not, as you know, in this life,

spread equally. Some parts of it have more on them than have other parts. Some of God's dishes are full; some not so full; some empty. Some of God's children have, in His providence, been made to sit down in a good place at His table, and have always plenty, and are full; while others have been placed by Him where the table is not so full, and where they sit waiting and hungry. There is enough on the table for all, if it is once distributed rightly; if only those at God's table, to whom He has given plenty, will share their abundance with those who have less or nothing. And that is just what God, who is the father alike of all men, wants us all to do. God might Himself thus equalize His bounties: giving to each one of His children just what He gave to every other. But, for wise reasons, His distributions are unequal. To some He, in His providence, has given much, to others little. But God does not mean that those to whom He has given much shall keep all He gives them. If He has put much on the table before you, He does not mean that you shall eat up all He has thus placed before you yourself. He wants you to share your allowance with your brother on the other side of the table. He wants to use you as an assistant at His table to help Him distribute His bounty. He wants you to aid Him in waiting on the table, in helping the young and more helpless ones, your own brothers and sisters, who have a less- favored place at the family board than you; your poor and needy brothers and sisters; the hungry, the homeless, the naked, the orphan, the widow, the afflicted, the fallen, the heathen, all, all over the earth, who, in any way, need help, and to whom you can, in any way, minister bodily or spirit-

ual good. To help them, to be generous and liberal, to share with them, as your own brothers, as children, like yourself, of the same God and Father, the superabundance which has providentially fallen to your lot—this is what God wants you to do. This is what the new and bountiful harvest, which He has again given you, urges you to do.

To us all, today, there comes a new harvest voice, saying: "God has again prepared a table for you. More than you need has He given you. Others have little or nothing. Some want bread. Some want clothing. Some want education. Some want homes; some Bibles; some ministers; some houses of worship; some the gospel. Help them. Give them what they need. Reach them a slice of the loaf of plenty which God has put in your hands. Share with them of your rich bounty. Break to them, in body and soul, the bread of life which your heavenly Father has so lavishly broken to you. Freely ye have received, freely give." "As ye have opportunity, do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

But, finally, we learn from this subject,

(*d*) That, whether God has given us much or little, we should all be thankful for what He has given us.

The best of us have more than we deserve. It is all of His own unmerited paternal goodness that any of us have anything. Receive these table blessings, then, with which God daily feeds you, with grateful hearts! Sing Him, in return, your songs of loudest praise! Lift up your souls in melody to Him for the mercy with which, in each returning harvest season, He crowns your life! Thank Him for the harvest;

for the bread of the field; for luscious fruit and waving corn and ripened grain! Thank Him now, today, here in His house! Each Sabbath day thank Him! In your homes, by your family altars, in your closets, as you gather around your daily tables, thank Him! Give thanks, constant thanks, I say, to God, for your daily bread! Above all, thank Him for the divine table of His grace which He has prepared for us poor sinners! For the precious gospel, for Christ, His divine Son, our Redeemer—for this, in loudest notes, praise Him! And thus will you prepare yourself to join in that other and blessed heavenly harvest service, the choir of the skies, whose anthems of harvest thanksgiving roll forever, in melody harmonious and unbroken, around the uplifted and resplendent throne of God!

XXII.

THE OPENED LITTLE BOOK.

Reformation Day.

COLLECT.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, unto Thy Church, Thy Holy Spirit, and the wisdom which cometh down from above, that Thy word, as becometh it, may not be bound, but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve Thee, and in the confession of Thy name abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

XXII.

"And he had in his hand a little book open."
REVELATION, x:2.

THIS Book of Revelation is a series of prophetic emblems or pictures of the various important events which should occur to the Church of Christ in her history from the early days of Christianity down to the end of time. It is a pictorial outline of what would befall her in her progress down through the centuries; a sublime panoramic view, presented by the Holy Ghost to the vision of John, on the Isle of Patmos, and through him to our vision, of the unfolding plans of God in the growth and spread of the great spiritual kingdom of His Son over the earth.

The emblem or picture here exhibited, in this tenth chapter, and referred to in our text, is that of a mighty angel, coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, having a rainbow upon his head, his face like the sun, his feet like pillars of fire, and especially as having a little open book in his hand.

"This having a book in his hand indicates," says Albert Barnes, "that, in the prophetic period covered by this emblem, something of importance was to be communicated to men, and that something was to be accomplished by the agency of a book." "The symbol, or picture, here employed is not," he says, "as in the second verse of the sixth chapter, a bow, emblem of conquest; nor is it, as in the fourth verse, a

sword, emblem of battle; nor is it, as in the fifth verse, a pair of scales, emblem of exactness and justice; but it is a book, a speechless, silent, yet mighty thing; not designed to carry desolation through the earth, but to diffuse information, to impart light and truth. A book is the significant and especially appropriate emblem of the particular period in the history of the Church, which is here foreshadowed."

But, what special time or period in the Church's history is thus here foreshadowed? To what occurrences or events in the Church's history does this picture of a descending angel, having thus in his hand, as the means or instrument by which to accomplish his mission among men, a book, an open book, especially refer?

Almost all Protestant commentators, I answer, regard it as an emblem, or prophetic foreshadowing of the great Reformation of the sixteenth century. The angel whom God raised up in that day, and clothed with mighty moral and spiritual power, and made a very blessing from heaven both to the Church and to the world, was Martin Luther. The work or mission upon which he was thus divinely sent, and for which he was especially and divinely endowed, was the work of dispelling the intellectual and moral darkness which had settled down, with midnight gloom, upon the world, and to bestow upon it again the blessed boon of the light of the glorious gospel of the Son of God. And the agency, the means, by which he especially wrought his great work, and accomplished this mission, for which God had thus raised him up, was a book: and that book was God's book, the Bible: the unchained, unsealed,

open Bible, the precious divine word, received first, with all its living spiritual power, into Luther's own soul, making him a new man in Christ; and then given, in their own language, to all the people, as God's supreme rule to them, both of faith and of practice.

The "angel," whom John thus saw, having in his hand an open book, was, then, our own Luther; and by that book, as a mighty spiritual agency, he accomplished the Reformation.

"The Open Bible and the Reformation;" or "What the Bible did for Luther and What Luther Then did for the Bible:" let this, on the present occasion, be our subject of thought and of discourse.

In considering this thought let us note well.

I. That, Previous to the Days of the Reformation, the Bible was not an Open Book.

For many centuries before the days of Luther, God's Word was a hidden or closed volume, known by few even of the clergy, and was wholly unknown by the great mass of the people.

One reason for this scarcity of God's Word lay, of course, in the fact that like all other books, previous to the invention of the art of printing, it was then only in manuscript, and copies of it were very slowly multiplied, and were necessarily very costly. Every line had then to be written out slowly and carefully on parchment; and such was then, in consequence of this labor of producing it, the cost of a copy of the sacred Scriptures that few persons could afford to own a copy. Only by the wealthy, only in the libraries and archieves of monasteries and uni-

versities, could then a copy of God's Word be found.

In Paris, at the dawn of the Reformation, a Bible would sell for five hundred crowns ($600)), when money is said to have been worth about fifteen times as much at it is now worth. Contrast this money value then, of a copy of God's Word in that day, with the money value of a copy of that Word now, when a copy of the Bible can be bought for twenty-five cents, and when the poorest can possess it, as well as the wealthiest; when every child can have a copy of it; when every home, even the humblest, possesses it; when, through the agency of the Bible Society, a copy of this precious Word of God is given, as a gratuity, to those unable to buy it. How different, in this respect, and how much more blessed our privilege than was theirs who then lived in those centuries before the Reformation!

And besides the cost of the Bible, so great was then the ignorance, both of the clergy and the people, that even if copies of the Bible had been abundant, it still would have been a closed book through sheer inability to read it. Hallam, in his "History of the Middle Ages," says: "Is is easy to produce abundant testimony of the prevailing ignorance in the tenth century and onwards. In almost every great 'council' of the Church, which was then held, the ignorance of the clergy forms a subject for reproach. In the reign of Charlemagne, not one priest in Spain, out of a thousand, could address a letter of comon salutation to another. King Alfred of England declares that he could not recollect a single priest, south of the Thames, the best part then of England, who understood the ordinary church prayers, or who could translate the Latin into his mother

tongue." And Dr. Robertson, in his history of Charles V., who was emperor in the days of Luther, says: "Many of the clergy did not understand even the "Breviary' which they were obliged daily to recite, and some of them could scarcely read it." There were "doctors of divinity," indeed, in those days, who had never even seen a whole copy of God's Word. Luther himself tells us that he was already grown to manhood, and was already half through his university course, before he knew there was such a book as the Bible, as he afterward found it to be; but, up to that time he supposed that the whole of the Bible was contained in the psalter and prayers which he had been taught from childhood to recite. Thus was the Bible then a closed book even to the clergy. How much more "closed" must it have been to the poor people! How dense, under such an ignorant ministry, must have been the moral ignorance and darkness of the masses!

In addition to all this bear in mind, also, that the Bible was then in an unknown togue, and the little of it that was then read in the churches was read in a language which the people could not at all understand. The Bible in the vernacular was regarded as a dangerous book to place in the hands of the people, because its reading would prove the source of heresies. Hence, translations into the vernacular of the people were forbidden. In 1468, the Archbishop of Mayence issued an edict against the printing of any sort of religious book in German, especially the Bible, among other reasons, the singular one, that the German language was not adapted to convey correctly religious ideas, and, therefore, they would be profaned. Hence, while there were German

translations of the Bible before Luther's, they were not given by the Church to the people, and down to Luther's time the German people did not have God's Word in their own tongue. What was given them by the Church was given them in Latin, a language of which they were wholly ignorant.

Then, to complete this work of making the Bible a "closed book," even the reading of it was also prohibited by the Romish Church, and people were forbidden, under the severest penalties, to have a copy of it in their possession. Whatever may be the policy of the Romish Church now, and she only changes her policy in this respect as far as necessity compels her, it is simply a clear matter of history, that then, and for centuries before and afterward, she prohibited both the possession and reading of God's Word to the people. She has always openly declared that "the laity" were incompetent rightly to interpret God's Word for themselves; that they were in danger of perverting and wresting its truths to their own spiritual destruction; that "the Church," meaning by "the Church" the pope, councils and priests, must interpret it to them, and declare to them what they shall believe and do in order to be saved. The people, in a word, have ever been kept in ignorance of the Bible by the Church of Rome, and in every possible way she has always, in order, through their ignorance, to hold them under the despotism of her spiritual power, made to them God's Word a closed book, locking and sealing it, and, under penalty of being branded as a "heretic" and burned at the stake, forbidding anyone to break the lock and seal which she had thus placed upon it. Is proof demanded? Read history. In the year

1229, the council of Toulouse expressly prohibited the reading of the Scriptures to the laity. In the year 1270, James the First, King of Arragon, commanded that all copies of the Bible in the common language should be burned, and that whoever should be found with any such book would be considered and treated as a heretic. In the year 1400, Pope Alexander III., anathematized, or officially cursed, all translations of the Bible into the common language. The first English translation of the Bible, made by Tyndale, was bought up by the Romish authorities of England, and the whole edition was burned; and while the translator was preparing a second edition, he also was seized, and, for this crime of seeking to give the common people God's Word in their own tongue, he also was burned. Thus, down to the days of the Reformation, did the Church of Rome steadily do all in her power to close the volume of God's Word to the people; to make it a "sealed," a "shut" book to the laity. And this is still her policy. She, today, forbids her people the reading of it. She condemns the reading of it in the public schools. In countries where she has full control she employs the aid of law, and, through the civil authorities, she ferrets out its possession by any of her people, takes it by force away from them, and inflicts both spiritual and civil penalties upon those who thus dare to own and read it. By the late Pope Pius IX, as also by the present Pope Leo XIII, so-called "Encyclical Letters" have been issued, anathematizing all Bible societies for translating and giving to the people, in their own tongue, God's Word.

Such, then, at the time of the Reformation, and for

centuries before, was the condition of the people with regard to this blessed book, the Bible; that book which God, in mercy, has given to man, to be the individual possession of all the race, and to guide each one through life here to bliss and immortality hereafter. It was then a "shut," a "sealed," a "prohibited" book. Its glorious precepts, promises, hopes, its simple plan of salvation without penance or price paid to priest, its offer of eternal life only through faith in Christ as the all-sufficient sacrifice for human sins, were then all unknown, and gross darkness everywhere covered the land; a black moral night, without a star, without one single clear, undimmed ray of Bible light to point men from earth to heaven.

But an "angel" descended and in his hand he held a book, an unchained and unsealed book, an open book. That angel was Luther. God gave Luther to the world, and through him gave the Bible, an open Bible, to the whole human race.

And hence I now remark:

II. That, in the Reformation, Under Luther, the Bible Again, as in the Early Days of Christianity, Became an Open Book.

You are all familiar with the circumstances of how the Bible and Luther first met; of Luther's finding the Bible, when a student in the university at Erfurt, and what its influence on him was. Examining one day some books in the university library, he providentially came across a Latin Bible. He opened it and gazed and wondered and read with delight. Rather, God opened it for him. There was

a Providence in the very opening, that day, of the book, at the page and place where it opened. It opened at the simple story of Hannah consecrating her boy Samuel to the Lord. It was a part of the Bible he had never seen before; it was all new to him; and he at once became absorbed in it.

What a providence! Had the Book, that day, opened at one of the Epistles, or Gospels, or lessons of the Romish service with which he was familiar, he would, probably, at once have laid it aside under the false impression that he already knew all about it. But God, that day, opened that Book, and, with His own invisible hand, caused it to bend back at the very page where He wished. Thus once opened to him, Luther, again and again, day after day, secretly returned to this new-found treasure and drank in its precious truths, saying: "My God, I would not wish any richer possession than a copy of this Thy blessed Book."

That open Bible soon opened Luther's eyes: opened them to see that he was a great sinner, and needed a Savior; and opened his heart also: opened it to believe in Christ as his Savior, and to know that only by faith in this crucified Son of God could any sinner be justified before God. Thus did that providentially opened Latin Bible, in the University of Erfurt, open Luther's soul to understand and embrace the whole divine plan of redemption through Christ. That open Bible, in time, led to his conversion, and from that finding of the Bible, and from the blessed effects of it on his own soul, Luther felt himself called of God to declare its precious truths to others, and, if possible, to make the whole world partake with him of its rich blessings. Through the

Bible, Christ was first born in Luther's own soul, and then, with that same Bible, through him, Christ was born also in thousands and millions of other souls. Once open to him, he gave up his life to the one grand work of making it an open Bible, also, to every human being on all the earth. In a word, the Bible once opened to Luther, and having once led him to Christ, there was originated the Reformation of the sixteenth century. "To the study of that new-found book," says Albert Barnes, "he gave himself with untiring diligence and steady prayer, and the effect was to show to him the way of salvation by faith, and ultimately to produce the Reformation. No one, acquainted with the history of the Reformation, can doubt that it is to be traced to the influence of the Bible: that the moving cause, the spring of all that occurred in the Reformation, was the impulse given to the mind of Luther and his fellow-laborers by the study of that one book, the Bible." And hence, no better symbol of the Reformation could, on Patmos, have been given to John than the symbol of an angel descending from heaven, with a rainbow around his head, and with a cloud of light encircling him, and with an open book in his hand, holding forth again to mankind, through Luther and the reformers, God's own precious, inspired and incorruptible Word.

This, then, is what the open Bible did for Luther. It made him a "new man in Christ"; and gave him a sure and blessed hope of eternal life.

And now let us see what Luther, in return, did for the Bible, and did, also, with the Bible.

First of all he translated it into the language of

his people, so that every German could read it in his own tongue.

Luther felt that God's Word was given by God, as a precious gift, to every man, and should be in the hands of everyone; and he resolved, in spite of the decrees of councils and popes, and at the risk of life itself, that he would also, if possible, give it to everyone. Hence, although burdened with countless other labors and cares, he began the work of translating the Scriptures into the German for the use of his own dear German people. As Paul wrote some of his epistles while in prison, and as John wrote his Apocalypse when banished to the Isle of Patmos, so Luther, when a prisoner for nine months in the Castle of Wartburg, which he called his "Patmos," translated the whole of the New Testament, and, in the year 1522, the first edition of it, numbering 3,000 copies, was given to the world. And, within eleven years afterward, fifty-six editions, numbering many thousands of copies, were published and scattered everywhere throughout the land. One publisher alone published one hundred thousand copies. And thus was the chain, by which Rome had so long bound God's Word, broken. Thus was the Bible, which she had so long cruelly "shut" and "sealed" against the people, again opened wide before them. And everywhere did the people, also, hail this new gift of God with rapture and delight, rejoicing in it with unspeakable joy. And everywhere, also, as men read, the scales fell from their eyes. They saw their errors, and forsook them; they broke loose from the corrupt church which had so long enslaved them, and everywhere they embraced the new faith of

Protestantism and of the Reformation under Luther.

In 1534, Luther's translation of the Old Testament was finished, and soon the people rejoiced in the possession of the whole Word of God. For seventeen long years he had toiled daily upon it, and often spent long nights upon it, but at last it was finished —a monument of his scholarship, his genius, his patience, his love for that Word, and his love for Christ and His Church.

About this time, also, Tyndale's translation of the Bible was made into English; but, as already remarked, every copy was hunted up and burned by the Romish Church, and the noble Tyndale himself was also burned. But still the work of giving the people God's Word went on. Translation after translation, in spite of Rome, was made into all the different languages of the principal nations, and has ever since been steadily going on, and is now, more than ever, going on. In about three hundred languages and dialects of the earth is the Bible now translated; and millions upon millions of copies are now annually scattered broadcast over the world, so that it is literally true that, in almost every tongue, it now speaks to every man the wonderful works of God.

By a most striking providence, the art of printing was invented just a short time before the Reformation; and it is an intensely interesting fact that the very first book ever printed was a Bible, a Latin Bible, printed in 1455. And thus, in the providence of God, has the press, even from the infancy of its history down to the present hour, and now more than ever, been a mighty agency to help on the Reformation work, by everywhere making God's

Word an open book to all nations. Thank God for the power of the press! May it continue to spread the Word of God, like "leaves for the healing of the nations," until every human being, over all the globe, shall, in his own tongue, possess it and be saved through it!

But Luther did much more than merely translate the Word of God in order to make it an "open book" to the people. He also, everywhere over Germany, established schools, so that the children and youth would be taught to read, and thus themselves be able to study God's Word. He also restored the Bible to its right place in public worship; and, instead of the idle ceremonies which the Romish Church had introduced, he re-erected the pulpit, and commanded ministers to preach the Gospel to the people. He also published catechisms, reducing God's Word into the form of simple questions and answers, for the better instruction of the young in the truths of religion. He also wrote commentaries and expositions of a large number of the books of the Bible, so as to explain fully its meaning, and help all to understand this message of God to them. He was also professor of theology in the University of Wittenberg, and there trained hundreds and even several thousand young men to go everywhere and evangelically preach the gospel. He was also himself a most earnest, eloquent and effective preacher of that divine Word, generally preaching five and six times each week, and sometimes oftener. And he especially always held to the principle that the Word of God was the one only supreme rule of faith and practice. Not the decrees of popes and councils, but the Word of God; by that alone must each man

be governed in both his faith and life. And hence, also, he always bade the people read and search the Scriptures, and believe and obey them, in spite of all that pope and council and priest might say to the contrary. "That Word of God," he said to them, "is your one sole arbiter; that is your guide, your light, your rule; there you are divinely taught your duty both toward God and man; there you learn what you must do to be saved; read, read, study, search, believe, obey, trust that; and doing so, you shall, also, most certainly be saved." These were the principles of Luther, and such were the thunder-tones in which he defended them. Any deviation therefrom, by placing any human writings between the Bible and the souls of men, is a perversion of Lutheranism, and constitutes an apostasy from Protestantism, and is a going over again to the fleshpots of Romanism. Nothing, therefore, can be more significant than the representation of Luther in bronze, holding the bible in one hand and pointing with the other to its open pages.

Thus did Luther direct the people to God's Word. And to that Word, in all things, he, also, ever steadfastly held himself; accepting its teachings, trusting its promises, obeying its commandments, and rejoicing in its hopes and consolations. And to that word, also, in all his many disputations and discussions with his Romish adversaries, did he hold them, saying that "unless refuted by evidence from the Holy Scriptures, he could not and would not recant anything"; adding, as he did after the diet of Worms: "If I had a thousand heads, I would allow them every one to be cut off rather than recant one single line of the Word of God."

Thus, in all these ways, did Luther and the Reformation make the Bible, which before was "closed," an "open book." And thus, as an unchained, unsealed, free, open book, do we, today, in our homes, in our schools, in our pulpits, possess it. This open Bible, among our many other priceless blessings, is a rich inheritance bequeathed to us by the Reformation. The open Bible gave light and freedom and peace and salvation to Luther; and Luther, in gratitude for what it had thus done for him, gave it to the world. And ours, today, through him, is also this precious boon: ours to own, to have in our homes, to hear preached, to read, to believe and confess and obey and teach; ours as a guide and comfort and strength in life, and ours, as a sun, to light us through the valley of the shadow, at last, in the hour of death.

Thanks be to God for this precious gift of His Word! And blessings on the memory of Luther and the Reformation through whom and by which this blessed Word of God was again brought out from under the dust and rubbish of the ages; through whom the chains and clasps and locks, by which a corrupt church had long bound it, were all broken off; and through whom, as an open book, it today is ours!

Thus "opened" to us by the providence of God, God forbid that we should now ourselves in any way close it, or suffer it to be closed! Free to us all, opened, with liberty to read it and believe it and obey it, may each one of us, also, each day of his life, avail himself also of his privileges: open, read, believe and obey it. May we not neglect or despise this great Reformation legacy which has thus come

down to us! May this Bible, so precious to Luther, be precious also to us! Daily let us read its blessed truths, and, with all our heart, let us believe and do all it teaches! Thus, through the Word of God, we shall be sanctified and saved! O Lord! order our steps in Thy Word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over us! Sanctify us through Thy truth! Thy Word is truth!

There is one wish of my heart which, on this festival day of our glorious Lutheran Reformation, I can not refrain from yet uttering before I close. It is a wish which I so fervently cherish, that if, before God calls me away from earth, I could see it realized, I would joyously sing the *Nunc Dimittis:* "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." It is a wish cherished deeply, also, I know, in many other Lutheran hearts besides my own. That wish is, that all Lutherans, in all this land of ours, of every language, and of all our now-separated bodies, were united in one organic whole: one harmonious, loving, undivided Lutheran Church; planted solidly and honestly on the basis of our pure Augsburg Confession; bound together in inseparable bands of mutual confidence and love; laboring together, as one mighty host, to accomplish the great mission which God has, manifestly, here entrusted to us. This is, today, among my heart's holiest and most earnest wishes. Nor is it without encouragement and hope that I cherish it. I probably will not live to see it; but some day, in the not very distant future, other eyes will see it and other hearts will rejoice over it. Even now already the morning of that blessed day is here. Tokens of its dawn are all

about us. The old bitternesses are largely gone. The old sounds of conflict and war and battle are hushed. A better feeling of brotherhood, a larger mutual confidence, a warmer love, a sweeter charity, a more tender longing after each others' fellowship and co-operation in Christian work, have come over us all. Everywhere the divine spirit of peace is brooding over us, and stilling us into the gentleness of Christ. For this let God, today, be devoutly praised. May it all be, as I truly believe it also is, the beginning of the longed-for, perfect day in which all in our land, bearing the Lutheran name, shall be one in polity, in worship, in service, in doctrine, in love! And for Christian union among all Christ's followers let us devoutly pray, beseeching the divine Master that all His disciples may come, more and more, into the unity of the pure faith and love.

There is, alas, much so-called Christian union in our day, which has, indeed, but little in it that is truly Christian. The unity among His followers for whch our divine Savior prayed was unity in the Christian faith, unity in pure evangelical doctrine, unity especially in the right apprehension and bold confession of the person and work of Jesus as the eternal Son of God and only Savior of the world. The union, therefore, that makes light of biblical doctrine, that ignores the supremacy of evangelical truth, that smiles with toleration and easy indifference on error, is surely not Christian union. It lacks the essential element of loyalty to the truth, the pure truth which Christ came from heaven to teach us, and of which He was Himself the embodied exhibition. "First pure, then peaceable," is the first element of all genuine and permanent Christian union.

And yet more is needed in a true basis of Christian union than mere knowledge and acceptance of the same system of evangelical truth, or than the common possession of the mere element of orthodoxy. Love is also an absolutely necessary element. The truth must be held and spoken; but it must ever be held and spoken in love, along with truth then must be love, sanctifying truth; love, making us joyously humble in our possession of the truth; love, animating us with holy desire that all other souls should also come to know and accept the truth; love, mellowing us into gentleness and patience and prayerful hope toward those who, charmed by error, reject and oppose the truth; love, that impels us, in daily prayer, to look up to God in behalf of all who, in any degree, are yet held in the blindness and bondage of ignorance, or of prejudice, or of bigotry, or of error, or of sin of any kind, that they may speedily be set free, and be soon brought out into the sweet and happy liberty of the fullness of the truth as it is in Christ. Thus must love and charity permeate and hallow all our precious treasure of biblical truth: the gentle and loving spirit of Christ sanctifying our orthodoxy; and these together, as a heavenly compound, must be the ground-work upon which the Holy Ghost will rear, for the glory of God, the beautiful temple of Christian union. Oh, Thou divine Savior, Head of Thy Church Universal, give to us all, as Thy disciples, and to all Thy followers all the world over, not only more knowledge and love of the truth, but more love also of all who either have, or sincerely seek to have, the truth as it is in Thee, and Thy name, Thou common Savior of us all, shall have all the praise, world without end. Amen.

XXIII.

DIVINE BREAD FOR EARTH'S HUNGRY MULTITUDE.

Missionary Festival.

COLLECT.

Almighty and most merciful God, who hast given Thy only Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, help Thy Church to fulfill the command to preach the gospel to every creature. Send forth more laborers into the harvest. Direct and defend all missionaries in their work, and grant them abundant success. Open the hearts of the heathen, that they may receive Thy word and believe on Him whom Thou hast sent. Let the nations speedily be given to Thy Son for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Cause Thy people to consecrate to this service more of the possessions which Thou dost give them, that the triumphs of Thy kingdom may be hastened and the earth be filled with Thy glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XXIII.

"But Jesus said unto them: They need not depart; give ye them to eat."

MATTHEW, xiv :16.

THE miracle known as the miracle of "The Loaves and Fishes," or the miraculous feeding by Christ of more than five thousand persons in the wilderness, has a much greater or wider significance than its merely historic significance, or that which belongs to it simply as an occurrence in the life of Christ. It has also what may be called a symbolic significance. It was an object-lesson of future experiences in the history of the Church of Christ: foreshadowing and indicating how a spiritually famishing world was, by the Church, to be fed with the gospel of Christ, or, rather, with Christ himself, as the Bread of Life, of which, if a man eat, he shall never hunger. It is, therefore, what may fittingly be designated a "missionary miracle"; a symbol of the missionary work of the Church; an object-lesson, given by the Savior himself, in which, by a visible and impressive miraculous act, He sets forth, as in a picture, every phase of aggressive Christian activity for the evangelization and salvation of the world.

In this light of its missionary suggestions and illustrations, let us, today, study this miracle, and learn from it what we can with regard to our duty to give the Gospel, as Christ has commanded us, to all the world.

Analyzing the record of this miracle of Christ feeding the five thousand, we find in it five suggestive facts, viz: a destitute and perishing multitude; an abundant divine provision or supply; an obedient human instrumentality; an employment of wise method or order; and a realization of joyful and glorious results.

There was here, before the Savior and His disciples, when He wrought this miracle,

I. A Destitute and Perishing Multitude.

The condition of the people is thus described by the disciples: "This is a desert place, and they have nothing to eat." Their one great want, therefore, was bodily food, bread with which to satisfy hunger and save themselves from suffering and perishing by starvation.

In this we quickly detect a picture of the world's moral and spiritual condition without the Gospel. Our world, according to God's Word, because of sin, and because of its loss of God's favor and of the rich spiritual blessings which He alone can give, and with which alone its deep spiritual wants can be supplied, is a spiritually hungry world. The great human family is simply a great family or multitude of destitute and actually perishing sinners: sinners famishing in the moral wilderness of their own guilt, starving with hunger for want of food for their immortal souls, dying for lack of that divine bread which alone can satisfy the longing and cravings of their being after something higher and better and more nourishing than all that earth, at its best, can give them.

Such a spiritually hungry and perishing multitude is the great heathen world of today, nearly ten hundred millions in number, who have never yet even so much as heard of Christ and of His gospel; who are crying out in the darkness after God; who are seeking to feed their souls on the husks of superstition and false worship; who feel themselves needy and in spiritual want, yet know not how to supply it; whose whole moral and spiritual land is desert, without anything green or life-giving and saving upon which they can feed. A sad condition, indeed, is that, today, of the great heathen world without the Gospel: a hungry multitude wanting bread.

Similar is the moral or spiritual condition of the nations of the earth, dwelling today in lands designated as semi-civilized: lands, *e. g.*, like Egypt and Arabia and Turkey and many other countries, over which the false religion of Mohammed and other false religious faiths hold sway, numbering also hundreds of millions, all of whom are spiritually unsatisfied and unfed and who are longing and hungry for bread; bread, for their souls; bread, upon which they can really feed, and which, if they eat, will satisfy them; bread, in a word, such as Christ only can give in the gift of Himself as the Bread of Heaven to the soul.

And then, even in our own Christian lands, under the very shadow of the Church, and in the very light of the Gospel, how many millions of morally hungry and perishing souls there are: vast multitudes who are without God in the world; who despise the Christ that bought them; who reject the salvation that is offered them; who are indifferent to all the claims upon them of the Gospel; living only for the

things that are material and temporal; seeking to feed themselves upon the dry chaff of sense and sin: restless, empty, hungry souls, ever unfed and unsatisfied, needing something; needing bread, bread such as earth can not give them; needing, in a word, though they know it not and will not believe it, the bread offered them in the Gospel; needing Christ, who, in His person and work, is living bread, real bread, bread, of which, if a man eat, he shall never hunger.

Thus is there, indeed, in this world of ours, today, a multitude of hungry souls: a multitude so large as to be innumerable; not five thousand, but thousands of thousands; a multitude not of hungry bodies but of hungry immortal souls; a multitude going down, not to bodily death, but down to eternal death.

To many of these we, as a Lutheran Church, are especially obligated to carry the gospel. There are some such in the foreign field: in India and in Africa, where we have undertaken mission work, and where millions of heathen souls, in the providence of God, are entrusted to our spiritual care and are looking to us to tell them of Christ. And especially in the home field, right here in our own land, God has given us, as a Church, a magnificent opportunity for mission work. Countless of our population are specially allied to us and look to us to give them the gospel. Let us not withhold it from them.

In this miracle which Christ there wrought, there was, however, let us note,

II. An Abundant Divine Provision or Supply for the Hungry Multitude.

Hungry and needy as that vast multitude there was, Jesus, we read, furnished an abundance of the best of food for them all. "And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes; and they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men." Food, good food, divine food, food in abundance, food for all the multitude, food for the men and for the women and for the little children, food with which to satisfy the hunger and save the life of them all, did Jesus, there in the wilderness, then provide.

And what now is all this abundant divine provision of bodily food for all that vast, needy multitude but a picture of the gospel, of the divine plan of salvation, of Christ himself, the spiritual food which God has given to satisfy the hunger of souls, and to save the life of our perishing world?

Christ repeatedly speaks of himself as bread: as "the Bread which came down from heaven;" as the only Bread which can give or sustain spiritual life, offered to all our perishing race, adapted to all, needed by all, and without which man is wretched and lost, both in this life and in the life to come. This is what the world now and always needs. It is not legislation nor philosophy nor science nor education nor civilization nor mere self-culture of any kind which is today the real need of our perishing world; but it is the gospel of Christ, the divine, spiritual food, which Good has provided for it, and which alone can satisfy its deepest and mightiest wants. For, have whatever else a soul may, if it have not Christ as its "portion" and as spiritual "food," it abides a famished and an unfilled soul. Rest on whatever else it will, it yet is restless until

it rests, through Christ, in God. The gospel is, therefore, the one supreme need of the world, the need of the nations everywhere, the need of the millions in every land, because that alone morally elevates, purifies, renews, satisfies and is able to save man from the guilt and curse of sin.

And what our lost world thus needs, God has also provided. Does our famishing world need bread, God has furnished it with bread. Does it need a Savior, God has sent to it a Savior. Does it need the gospel, the good news of salvation through Christ, God has given it that gospel. The miracle has been wrought. The loaves and fishes have been created and multiplied into a great plenty for every human being, so that all now may, as welcome guests, without money and without price, sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. "My Father," says Jesus, "gives you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is He that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

This miracle of thus providing food for this hungry multitude in the wilderness has, therefore, a fine symbolical significance. It is a symbol of the provision, or food, which has been divinely furnished for man's spiritual nature, for the supply of the wants of his soul. That miracle in the wilderness was a miracle especially of power, wrought by Christ directly, in His visible person as the God-man: the miracle of man's spiritual supply, of his rescue from soul-hunger, is especially a miracle of grace, in which Christ mediately, in His church, through word and sacrament, gives Himself as divine food to our spiritually

hungry and perishing world. As He was there, in the miracle of the increase of the loaves and fishes, present, so, in word and sacrament in His Church, is He now also actually or really present. He was then visibly present; now He is invisibly, and yet no less truly present. In the preached word He is always thus really present, Himself as a Savior to all who hear, becoming to all, according as He is accepted or rejected, either "a savor of life unto life or of death unto death." And so He is also really present, in all His inseparable divine-human personality, in His own holy sacraments: in the sacrament of baptism to regenerate us, and in the sacrament of the altar to nourish and sanctify us. In the supper He feeds us on His own sacred body and blood, in our reception of the bread and wine giving Himself to us, saying: "Take, eat, this is My body. Drink ye all of it, for this is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." But do you, with Nicodemus, ask: "How can these things be?" Do you say: "All this is a mystery, transcending your comprehension, contrary to the suggestions of your reason?" I admit it. Our holy Christianity is full of mysteries. Regeneration itself, Christ told Nicodemus, was a mystery which neither he, nor any other man, could understand. So that miracle of the loaves and fishes was a great mystery, unsolvable save as the work of God. The mystery of the "real presence" of our Lord, in His own holy supper, is no greater mystery. Better, then, dear friends, do, with regard to this holy sacrament of the Lord's supper, just what the hungry multitude did in the wilderness, raise no questions of reason, indulge in no speculations or cavils, simply know that you are

spiritually hungry, feel your need of Christ as your Savior, and then thankfully and trustfully take what He offers you in His word and sacraments, even Himself, and live. To trust is better than to know.

We, as Lutherans, believe, of course, that in our distinctive Lutheran doctrinal system, as taught by Luther, and as exhibited in our Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechism, we have and hold this gospel, this bread of heaven as offered in God's Word, in its purest and truest apprehension. Believing this, upon us also, therefore, especially devolves the duty to be a missionary church, *i. e.*, to take the gospel as God has given us light and grace to know and experience it, and, in that special apprehension or knowledge of it, give it to the world.

Thus has the Luthera Church, I am happy to say, done in the past; thus is she now doing. From the very beginning of her history she has been a missionary church. She is thus such a missionary church today, and is doing magnificent service now, in many lands over the earth, for the evangelization of the world. May she always thus be such a missionary church, for only thus will she be true to her duty and high calling of God.

In looking at the record of this miracle, we find, however, now as a third striking feature,

III. An Obedient Human Instrumentality, or Human Agency by which this Miraculous Divine Supply was Brought to this Famishing Multitude.

That instrumentality or agency was the disciples of Jesus. To them Jesus said: "Give ye them to eat." We read that, "looking up to heaven, He

blessed and brake and gave the loaves to the disciples," and then "the disciples gave them to the multitude." Not, therefore, by immediate, direct, divine agency, not by the ministry of angels, not by miraculous distribution, not by the multitude coming and helping themselves, not by any of these means did this divine supply of food find its way to the mouths of the needy thousands. The medium or instrumentality by which it was given to them was the obedient service of the disciples. There was the perishing multitude, and there also was the abundant miraculous supply for them, and there also was the Master's short and clear command: "Give ye them to eat!" That command they heard and promptly obeyed, and soon, as the result, all those gathered hungry thousands were abundantly fed. The human need and the divine supply were thus quickly brought together, and soon the need ceased to exist, and soon the hunger disappeared in the fullness and richness of the supply.

And what a picture, again, is not all this, of Human Agency in the spread of the gospel. The bread of the gospel, under the Savior's spiritual economy, is not directly given to the perishing world by Himself. It is not carried to the ends of the earth by miracle. It is not preached and distributed by angels. It is by the agency, always, of the disciples of Jesus, by the instrumentality of His Church. The gospel loaves and fishes, if the world is ever to receive them at all, must be carried out to the famished multitude by Christian hands. By the Church must the spiritual need of a lost world and the spiritual provision revealed in the gospel for that need be brought together. By converted man must

man still unconverted be furnished with the divine "food," without which he dies forever. Now, as then, on that day of this miracle, Jesus still says to His disciples: "Give ye them to eat."

And, all things considered, His own followers, His own renewed and redeemed Church is also the best agency which He could employ for this distribution of the Bread of Life to the famishing world: the best agency, in other words, by which to evangelize the unsaved multitude, out of Christ and the Church. Regenerated man is best fitted to tell unregenerated man of Christ, and persuade him to come to Christ. Gratitude, love, experience, all fit him to be a missionary to the unconverted. Having themselves eaten of this heavenly Bread, and experienced its life-giving blessedness, they also can best tell others how blessed it is, and offer to give it to them.

And this now is the whole conception of mission work. This is all that it is. It is simply bringing the need and the supply together, simply carrying "the Bread" to the man that is hungry, simply taking the medicine and bearing it to the sick. "Give ye them to eat:" this is today, as it has always been, the great missionary command of Jesus to all His people. He still says to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and teach all nations." He still exclaims: "Freely ye have received, freely give." This is still, as eighteen hundred years ago, His commission to His Church. He still bids her to go forth in His name, and evangelize the world.

The manner and spirit in which, both on the part of the Savior and of His disciples, this food was given to the multitude, also suggest many lessons to us. They suggest the best manner and the true

Christian spirit in which the work of missions, or of the world's evangelization, must be prosecuted. Let us look briefly at this manner and spirit here suggested.

Down at the bottom of this miracle, as the source and secret spring of it, there was first of all, let us note, in the great heart of Jesus, deep compassion and love for the perishing multitude. So, let us remember, does all true missionary spirit and effort spring from love, from Christ-like pity for perishing souls and for a lost world.

Again, note that, on the disciple's part, there was simple and prompt obedience to the Savior's command. So the work of missions must now and always be carried on in the spirit of simple and unquestioning obedience to Christ's missionary command to us.

Again, this miracle, let us note, was wrought by the Savior in connection with prayer. He "looked up to heaven," we read, "and blessed the loaves and fishes," before He gave them out, through the disciples, to the multitude. So now, also, only by much prayer can the cause of missions be successfully prosecuted, or can even a single soul be converted and saved.

Again, observe that there was large faith, on the part of the disciples, in the power and willingness of Jesus to enable them to do what He thus bade them do. So faith, in the presence and helping power of Christ, must now largely mark all missionary enterprises if they are to be crowned with success, leading us to attempt large things, and also to do large things.

Then, see again how there was an utter absence of

all selfishness, or seeking of self-ease, on the part of the disciples, in connection with this miracle: first feeding not themselves, but the multitude, forgetting their own needs in the needs of the hungry thousands around them. So now, in order to possess the real spirit of missions, and to do full and successful missionary work, all unholy love of self, all selfishness or self-seeking, must be rooted out of our natures, and the love of God and the love of souls must become the ruling passion and very life of our souls.

It was also, let us note, giving to the multitude only what Jesus gave the disciples to give them, by which the multitude was fed: a real giving, not simply a-pitying them, or a-praying piously for them, or a-wishing that they might be fed, but a real and actual giving to them of the very bread which Jesus gave them to give, that fed them. So now, it is giving; giving our time, giving our continued personal endeavor, giving of our money, giving the Gospel, the pure Gospel, only the Gospel, that actually brings life to the lost world, and that alone is genuine and efficient missionary work.

It was, let us also observe, but little that the disciples had with which to feed that great multitude; yet, little as it was, only "five barley-loaves and two small fishes," because Jesus commanded them to do so, they used that little, and lo, under His blessing, in the use of it, it multiplied and became a great blessing. So is it now in missionary work: the little that even the poorest can give, God demands, and, if rightly given, that little He will multiply into a rich blessing to multitudes of souls.

Here, in our missionary activities, I conceive, we often err. We limit our missionary activities by the

resources actually in hand, by what we see to be now already in our treasuries. We hesitate to trust God to supply the means if more are needed. We forget this miracle of the increasing loves and fishes, multiplying in the very act of distributing. Hence we undertake so little; and, though the great perishing heathen world is everywhere calling us, and so many open doors are divinely set before us, we keep looking at our five little barley-loaves and our two small fishes, and, forgetting the mighty power of God, which could multiply them into enough to feed all earth's millions, we say: "These are all we have; we can not, therefore, undertake more than small things for the world's conversion." O ye of little faith! Think of this miracle of the multiplied loaves and fishes, of the great multitude abundantly fed, of the many baskets remaining over, and undertake great things, trusting God to supply all the men and women and all the money which shall ever be needed to carry on any missionary work, home or foreign, to which, by His providence and Spirit, He calls us. We undertake too little because we trust divine help too little. Jesus says: "Give them to eat." Let us go and do it. There may be far from provision enough, actually in hand with which to do the work laid on us as a Church. But, with what we have, let us begin. Let us give out in wise missionary activity what we have. Let us distribute our few loaves and small fishes, all we have, and, in their very distribution, in the very doing of missionary work, God will multiply our supply, will raise up helpers and funds, will move hearts to liberality, will give the means as means are needed. It is God's

way. Let us know it, and act more heartily hereafter in view of it.

Another feature in this miracle was:

IV. An Employment of Wise Method or Order.

The Savior, we read, first of all commanded the multitude to be seated on the grass in "ranks" or "divisions" of fifty each, and then, when once order was thus secured, and quiet reigned, and all the best arrangements were perfected, then only the miracle was wrought, and then, quickly and successfully, was the good work done.

There is another most excellent missionary lesson for us in all this. In the prosecution of missionary work, or of the spiritual feeding of the world with the Gospel, we, too, need to observe order. We must carry on our missionary activities by means of organization and system. We must adopt, beforehand, judicious arrangements, plans, methods. And hence the propriety and wisdom of systematic beneficence in our congregations. Hence the wisdom and necessity of our "Apportionment Plan," of our "Boards," the "Board of Home Missions," of "Foreign Missions," of "Church Extension," of "Education," of "Beneficiary Education," the "Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society," the "Children's Missionary Society," and yet others, by means of which the whole conduct or management of our mission-work is simplified, consolidated, strengthened, and rendered, in every way, infinitely more efficient and successful than it possibly otherwise could be.

Always, then, let us work in this cause of missions, and give of our means, through these organ-

ized "societies" and "boards," elected by our General Synod, and appointed for these special purposes. We will thus, rest assured, both in our giving and in our labor, accomplish vastly more for the cause of Christ than we possibly can accomplish without such system and method. "In union there is strength." By order and plan there is always secured the largest and best possible results.

There is yet one other feature or factor in this wonderful miracle which we must notice, viz: there was

V. The Realization of the Most Joyful and Blessed Results from it to All Concerned.

The first result was, that the multitude were relieved of their hunger, and were saved from suffering and death. The miraculous bread was, therefore, certainly a great blessing to them. Such a blessing, also, in an infinitely higher degree, is the Gospel to a soul, to a nation, to our lost world. In every relation of life, to the individual, to the family, to the State, as regards commerce, science and legislation, in morals and religion, for body and for soul, during time and eternity, this Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is an unspeakable blessing. For this reason, therefore, we should prosecute, with all our might, the work of missions: laboring and praying and giving, to spread the Gospel over all the earth.

The second result, however, of this miracle, in which the disciples so willingly and heartily shared, was a rich reflex spiritual blessing to the disciples themselves. By thus feeding the multitude with this miraculous food they blessed themselves. They ex-

perienced the joy which always comes from relieving the wants of others. And theirs also was the high pleasure of being co-workers in well-doing with Christ, of having His approval and smile upon them, of being strengthened in their faith and love to Him by witnessing such new display of His power and goodness, of seeing Him exalted and honored before the eyes of all the multitude. Thus, in many ways, were the disciples themselves blessed by blessing others. But thus it always is in the service of Christ. All missionary work, all efforts to give the gospel to others, is rich in reflex spiritual blessings to ourselves. Every Christian, therefore, for his own sake, should be earnest and active in the cause of missions. For this reason, should we all, as Christians, engage, with all our might, in the great work of missions.

But the most glorious result of this miracle was, in the third place, that through it Christ was revealed as indeed the Son of God and the Savior of the world. It revealed His divine power, His infinite pity, His tender compassion. It confirmed His claim as the divine Messiah. For this end especially was it wrought, and, in order to show forth His glory, it was well worth working. But thus, also, in the work of missions, in the blessed work of distributing to the perishing world the "loaves and the fishes" of the gospel, is Christ, its heavenly Author, now glorified. Out of love, therefore, to Him, and in order that He may thus be honored and glorified, let the cause of missions ever lie very near our hearts. Let it have our most earnest thought, our deepest interest, our warmest sympathy, our unfaltering affection, our personal services, our fervent

and importunate prayers, our cheerful and generous contributions. Let us hear and heed, as addressed to us individually, our divine Savior's command: "Give ye them to eat," and then out of love for Him, and to bring glory to Him, taking the precious loaves and fishes of the gospel as He, in His Word, has given them to us, let us go forth everywhere, and give to all the world's great perishing multitude this divine Bread of Life, of which, if any man eat, he shall never hunger. Doing so, we shall contribute our part toward lifting up gain into the moral image of God our lost human race, shall honor Christ, whose servants and disciples we are, and shall bring back into our own souls, both for time and eternity, a rich tide of spiritual blessing. May the Savior fill us all with His own intense, self-sacrificing, missionary spirit, and thus may we be, indeed, His own true disciples.

XXIV.

THE LAD WITH THE LOAVES AND FISHES.

Children's Day.

COLLECT.

Almighty and everlasting God, who dost will that not one of these little ones should perish, and hast sent Thine only Son to seek and to save that which was lost, and through Him hast said, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God: most heartily we beseech Thee so to bless and govern the children of Thy Church, by Thy Holy Spirit, that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Thy Word; protect and defend them against all danger and harm, giving Thy holy angels charge over them; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

XXIV.

"There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

JOHN, vi:9.

IT would scarcely be right on "Children's Day" not to preach a sermon to the children. Everything, in both the Church and in the Sunday school, on this day, belongs to the little folks and young people; and, on this day, we larger people and older folks take a back seat, and say: "This is the Children's Day; let everything, today, be made to interest, to instruct, to gladden and to bless them."

The Bible is full of instances of child piety. The boy Samuel, the lad Joseph, the young King Josiah, the little Jewish captive girl in the hands of Naaman, the young shepherd boy David, the youthful Timothy: all loved and feared and worshipped God; did so while they were yet mere children, mere boys and girls; and God, we read, was, because of their piety, especially pleased with them, and in return loved them and blessed them all through their lives.

Some people, I know, think that a child can not be a Christian; that children must wait until they grow up to be men and women before they can love and serve God! But that is a great mistake Anybody can be a Christian, even the youngest! Just as soon as you are old enough to love your father or mother, you are old enough, also, to love God! As soon as you can ask your parents for anything, you can also pray to God, or ask Him for what you want!

As soon as you can obey them, you can also obey Him! As soon as you can understand and know your relations, as a child, to your parents, you can also be a child of God! And that is just what God wants. That is the reason why Jesus has provided a place in His Church for little children; why He instituted infant baptism, by which children are regenerated, and become members of His Church; and that is why He made it the special duty of the Church to religiously instruct the children, and watch over their souls, and educate and train them to be Christians. And the reason why the Savior, and why Christian parents and pastors and Sunday-school teachers, are all so anxious to have you children love and serve God, and be Christians, now, while you are yet young, is simply because they are all very much afraid that if you are not Christians now, while you are young, you probably never will be Christians at all, but your whole life, probably, will be spent in sin, and you probably never will be saved. For not many middle-aged or old people ever become Christians. Nearly all persons that ever live a Christian life begin to do so while they are yet young; and you will find that almost all who now belong to the Church, and are Christians, began to be Christians while they were yet boys and girls, or young men and young women. God says: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

Probably all the children here present, today, were in their infancy, baptized. Do you know, children, what that baptism of you, when you were infants, means? Do you know what it made of you? I will tell you. It means that you were then given to Christ, that you then became disciples of Christ,

that Christ then came as an indwelling Guest into your heart, that a new spiritual life in Christ was then, by the Holy Ghost, begun within you, that you then, in a word, became Christians. That is what your baptism did for you and that is what it made you. Do not forget this. Being baptized, you are now already little Christians. In your baptism, Christ's name was put on you, and you became His servants, His property. You have seen, have you not, little lambs, in the spring of the year, out in the green fields, with the initials of the name of the man who owned them on them? What did those initials mean? Why, they simply meant to say: "This lamb belongs to the man whose name it bears." And just so, in your baptism, you children had a name put on you, a precious name, a name above every name, the holy and divine name of Christ Jesus, your Savior; and the meaning of putting it on you was to express the blessed fact that Christ then took you to be always His, and that you were then given to be always His. This you should always remember. You should never forget that you are the baptized lambs of the fold of Christ. Every day, wherever you are, in whatever place or company you are, you should keep saying to yourself: "I am a little Christian, and I will try, in all things, to please and serve my dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Doing so, Jesus will always love you, and your whole life, from your infancy to old age, will be a holy and useful and happy one. Even now already, while little children, you can be happy little Christians, singing:

"I am Jesus' little lamb:
Therefore, glad and gay I am;
Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so."

My text, today, is about a little boy that I believe was a little Christian, *i. e.*, a boy who, though he was yet very young, loved Jesus, liked to be near Jesus, and liked to hear Him preach; and who, I imagine, was not ashamed to let everybody know that he loved Jesus: for, if people really do love Jesus as their Savior, they are not ashamed or afraid also to confess Him, and to let everybody know that they love Him.

Who this little lad, or this little boy, was, of whom our text speaks, I don't know. There is nothing here said, in the narrative, either about his name, or his parents, or where he lived, or how old he was, or how he looked! All that is said about him is what we here read in our text: "There is a lad here which had five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?"

Possibly he was a little orphan boy, with no father and no mother, homeless, wandering about everywhere, with nobody to look after him, or love him, or care for him! There are many such poor little orphan boys and girls in the world! And, oh, how I do pity them! Their condition is often a very sad one. If you know any such little orphan child, be very kind to it; and if you have kind, good parents, be thankful to God, every day, for them; and be sure to love and obey your parents; for you have no better friends in all the world than they are; and remember, too, that you will not always have them!

But I rather think this boy, after all, was not an

orphan. I think he must, at least, have had a mother. Why do I think so? Because, who but a mother would ever have fixed up that nice lunch for him, of those "five barley loaves, and those two little fishes," which he carried with him that day, and with which Jesus fed so many thousands of people? Because of what had been so kindly and thoughtfully done up for him, I conclude then, that this lad had a mother, a good, kind mother: and who was probably herself also a disciple or friend of Jesus, and who had probably told her little boy all about Jesus, and taught him to believe that He was the Messiah, the great promised Savior of the world! For some reason she may have been unable herself, that day, to go out with the multitude to hear Jesus preach, and to see the miracles which He might work; but she did not want her boy to miss the benefit of it all, and so she fixed up, we may suppose, that nice cold "lunch" for him, and then gave him her "good-bye" kiss, and said to him: "Now go, dear child, and hear the great Teacher, and see what He does, and remember all, and then tell me everything you see and hear, when you come this evening!"

And so this lad went with the great crowd that day to hear Jesus preach. The place where he preached that day was out in the country, away from any houses or town or city. It is called "a desert country," *i. e.*, a country where there was nothing growing that the people could eat, and no groceries or bread shops, where, even if they had had money, they could have bought food! And they were all, we read, very hungry: for Jesus had preached a very long sermon, lasting through the best part of the day. But the people didn't think it long. People

who are interested in good things never think a sermon long. And these people were so interested in what Jesus was preaching to them that they listened gladly until He was done; and so deeply interested were they in all that Jesus had preached to them that they, it appears, had forgotten all about their bodily hunger or want.

And now, there they were without anything to eat; out in a desert country, where there was no food of any kind that they might buy, and all of them very hungry! And so many of them, too: about five thousand men; and besides these five thousand men, probably five thousand more persons, women and children; altogether not less, probably, than ten thousand people. What a big crowd that was!

And the question now was, how to feed all this hungry multitude of people! The question asked was: "Whence, or where, shall we buy bread that all these thousands of people may have something to eat?" I do not wonder they asked that question; for to have ten thousand hungry people around you, and with nothing to feed them, makes the situation rather serious. The only way out of the trouble that the disciples of Jesus could think of, was, that the crowd should scatter out through the country around, and each one find or buy something for himself, the best way he could. But just then Jesus said: "No!" Jesus was not going to let them go away hungry. He was going to feed them all. He had a way in which to provide food for that great multitude. He was going to work a miracle, *i. e.*, He was going to create food for them. Out of a little He was going to make much; and even more

than enough for them all. And that is just what He did! For, remember that Jesus is God; and being God, He could do it. Being God He can make or do anything. And so here, in the "desert," He was able to make or multiply food enough to feed all that great gathering of hungry people!

And now, do you want to know how He did it? I will tell you. He used the five loaves and two fishes that that little boy had. Somebody said to Jesus: "There is a lad here, a little fellow, who has five barley cakes, and he has also two little fishes: but what are they with which to feed such a big crowd as this?" "Never mind," said Jesus, "tell the little fellow to bring his lunch basket here to Me." And the boy, just as soon as they told him that Jesus would like to have his barley cakes and his two little fishes, at once, it appears, took them and gave them to Jesus. And then Jesus, we read, took them and blessed them. And then He began breaking them up into pieces and He gave them to His disciples and they gave them to the people. And thus Jesus kept on breaking off pieces and the disciples kept on giving them to the hungry people; the bread and the fishes growing in the hands of Jesus just as fast as He broke the pieces off, until, at last, everybody in all that big company was fed and had just as much as he wanted or could eat. And even then there were yet many basketfuls left over.

Now, was not that a wonderful act which Jesus thus did? And does it not all most clearly prove that Jesus was, indeed, as He said He was, the Son of God and the Savior of the world: able to feed not people's bodies only, but able, also, to feed their hungry immortal souls?

But, there are some things about this lad with the barley loaves and fishes which Jesus thus made use of to feed the multitude, of which I wish especially, today, to speak. And I notice:

I. That this Lad had Something.

What had he? He had, we are told, "five barley loaves and two small fishes." It was not very much that he had, I confess; but still it was something, and with Jesus' added blessing, it proved, in the end, as we know, a very great deal.

But so everyone now has something, every boy, every girl, every young person, every young man, every young woman, like this lad of the text, everyone has something; something which they can give to Jesus, and which, with the added blessing of Jesus, will go far toward feeding the world's spiritually hungry and perishing multitude; will go far toward glorifying God and doing good. Not talents, perhaps, with which they can do any one great act of good in the world; but still, everyone, even the smallest and youngest, has something: some power to do good, something which he can give to Jesus, and which Jesus can use for his glory and the salvation of the world. You all have "five barley loaves and two small fishes." Do some of you little folks, perhaps, say: "Why, I have nothing. There is nothing that I, a little child, can give to Jesus. There is no way in which Jesus can use me, or anything that I, a mere child, a mere boy or girl, a young man or young woman only, have." Stop a moment and think! "There is a lad here," right here in this Sunday school, "which hath five barley loaves and

two small fishes." You are that lad. You have barley loaves and fishes that Jesus can use. What are they? Have you not minds to think; and hearts with which to love; and tongues with which to sing and speak and pray; and wills with which to choose the good; and hands and feet with which to run and act and do something for Jesus and for the good of others? And have you not an example which you can set for the good of others; and time which you can spend in well-doing; and pennies and dimes and even dollars, perhaps, which you can give to help spread the gospel? Oh, we all have something which we can give to Jesus! We all can do some good if we only want to do good. Even a little child, every little boy or girl, has at least "five barley loaves and two small fishes" with which to do good and to glorify God.

Remember that, young friends. If you have not much, you still, like this lad here in the text, have something. If you can not do or give much for Jesus you can still do a little and give a little. Only, like this lad here in the text, be willing to give to Jesus what you have, and even your little loaves and few fishes, with Jesus' blessing, will be made to feed a multitude.

A little boy once said to his mother: "I should like to have lived in the time of the Savior, so that I might have done something for Him." His mother smiled and said: "What could a child of your years have done for Him, my dear boy?" The little boy thought a moment and then said: "I could have run His errands for Him."

And here there is also a lesson for us parents. This lad of the text had, we may suppose, in his

little wallet or dinner basket, that day, just what somebody (his parents or his mother most probably) had put into it for him. What she had put in, he had. And that was what he carried with him and fed on and fed others with all that day. And so our children now have in their minds and hearts and characters and being, as they grow up and go out into life, what we, their parents and teachers, now, while they are children, put into them! Their mental and moral habits and spirit are what we now form in them! Their souls are like that lad's lunch basket. Before his mother put the barley loaves and fishes into it, it was empty; afterward it was full. So with our children. The moral training we give them, the truth or error, the sin or holiness, which we put into them, or allow others to put into them, is, to those souls, their food or their poison, their life or their death! They have what we give them! They carry with them and in them, out into life and up into eternity also, what we parents and teachers and pastors instil and live into them. What a responsibility! Be careful, O parent, be careful, O teacher, that you put the true bread of life, the barley loaves and fishes of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the living Savior, into the souls of the children and young whom God places under your care! For that alone, when once they get out into the "desert country" of the world and are spiritually hungry, will feed them and will, through them, be food for the hungry multitude around them.

But now I notice here another thing concerning this lad of our text:

II. That What He Had was Seen and Known by Others.

He was only, it is true, a little fellow; and that was a very great multitude of people; and one would have supposed that nobody would have seen or noticed so small a boy as he. But he was seen; he was noticed. Andrew, one of the apostles, had taken special notice of him, and knew also what he had in his little sack, or basket, for his dinner! And so had others taken notice of him! Little as he was, the big people around him had their eyes on him and saw what kind of a boy he was, and how he behaved himself, and what he had, and all about him! And so when Jesus wanted to feed the multitude, quite a number, it appears, at once thought of this boy, with the nice cold dinner, and said to Jesus: "There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes." The boy, you see, was known! People had silently been taking notice of him.

And thus, every boy and girl, and every young man and woman, now, is known and noticed by those around him. People see what children and young people are, and do, and promise for the future! The young sometimes think: "No matter what I do, or how I conduct myself! I am young, nobody notices me!" But they are noticed. "Even a child," says the Bible, "is known by his doings!"

A gentleman once advertised for a boy to assist him in his office. Nearly fifty applied for the place. Out of the whole number he, in a short time, chose one and sent the rest away. "I should like to know," said a friend, "on what ground you chose that boy. He had not a single recommendation with him." "You are mistaken," said the gentleman, "he had a great many: he wiped his feet when he came in, and closed the door after him, showing

that he was orderly and tidy. He gave up his seat instantly to the lame old man who entered, showing that he was kind and thoughtful. He took off his hat when he came in, and answered my questions promptly and respectfully, showing that he was polite. He picked up the book which I had purposely laid on the floor, and placed it on the table, while all the rest stepped over it or shoved it aside, showing that he was careful. And he waited patiently for his turn, instead of pushing the others aside, showing that he was modest. When I talked with him, I noticed that his clothes were carefully brushed, his hair in nice order, and his teeth white as milk. When he wrote his name, I observed that his finger nails were clean instead of being tipped with jet like the handsome little fellow's in the blue jacket. Don't you call these things letters of recommendation? I do; and what I can tell about a boy by using my eyes for ten minutes is worth more than all the fine letters he can bring."

Every young person in a community is known and has a reputation of some kind, good or bad! People know what young people carry in their knapsack or wallet of character and life; what kind of young men or women, what kind of boys and girls or children they are! And that explains why some young people are wanted and others are not wanted; why some can get and keep good situations and others can not; why some are always rising higher and higher in the world and in the esteem of their fellowmen, and others are not! It is not "luck," or "chance," that makes the difference! No! It is all because of what the young person is, and is known to be! Character and reputation decide it all.

Do not forget this, young people! And let your character and conduct be such that your fellowmen, older people who know you, must think and speak well of you, and must respect and admire you! As St. Paul once wrote to a young man whose name was Timothy, so would I today exhort every young man and every young person: "Let no man despise thee!"

There is, however, still another thing here in the narrative to be noticed concerning this lad, viz:

III. That Little as Were His Loaves, and Small as Where His Fishes, with the Blessing of Jesus on Them, They Became a Means of Great Help and Good to Many Thousands of People.

When Jesus once took those five barley loaves and two little fishes of his and blessed them, they at once became food abundant for all the gathered multitude! That little boy was instrumentally the means, that day, of feeding all that great crowd of big people!

But that is just what a boy still may do with Jesus' blessing on him. I tell you there is a great outcome for good in a good boy! There are grand possibilities in him. He may be the means, under God, of mentally and morally and spiritually feeding a whole multitude of his fellowmen. A good boy is like the acorn: he has in him the germ of the mighty oak. He possesses latent undeveloped talents of infinite power. The babe Moses in his floating basket of bulrushes, the young man Saul, a student at the feet of the learned Gamaliel, and above all, the child Jesus, the Son of God and the

Son of Man: what marvelous powers for good they all possessed! What an outcome of blessing to the world, down to the end of time and out into eternity, has flowed from their existence!

But thus, in some measure, has every boy in him the possibility of great good! He is little now, but he will not always be little! He will soon grow into a man! He now has only a few loaves and two small fishes; but like this lad of our text, these little possessions which he now has, his little gifts and talents, may, and will, with Christ's blessing, in time, be increased and multiplied into great talents and mighty gifts, which will prove a great stream of blessing to thousands and even millions of souls!

But there is also in every boy, let us remember, an infinite undeveloped capacity for evil, as well as for good. He may be a curse as well as a blessing to society! His loaves and fishes may, after a while, poison and ruin his fellowmen as well as feed and nourish them! Nero, Herod, Caligula, Judas, Mahomed, Voltaire, Paine, Ingersoll, were all, once, only boys.

What an object, therefore, of profound interest and care and solicitude should every boy, every girl, every young person, be to us all who are older! And what an incentive there is in this fact of each young person's possibilities, either for evil or for good, to parents and teachers and pastors, to train aright, and to see to it that all this undeveloped but mighty power that is thus in them be a sanctified power, a power which will, in their after life, all be consecrated to Christ, and all be employed in blessing and uplifting the world!

And how this fact of their influence and power, in

the future, either for evil or for good, should also affect the young themselves; and how it should lead them, now, while they are yet young, to do, as this lad here in our text did, follow Christ, hear Him, and give to Him and for His use, their gifts, all they have, even themselves! Thus only will they be a blessing in the world. Thus only will their life be worth living. Thus only will they do good with the gifts with which God has endowed them. Only, dear young people, when you once put your "five barley loaves and two small fishes," your talents of mind, of heart, of speech, of time, of influence, of example, of means, into the hands of Jesus and have His benediction on them, only then will you be able to feed the multitude: to be a blessing to the world in which you live. You may, like this lad in the text, not have much: only a few loaves, only two small fishes; but Jesus can make much out of them, and can make them feed and save the lives of many thousands.

Give your barley loaves and fishes, then, to Him. Give your talents; give yourselves, with all you have and are, as this lad in the text did, now, while you are young, to Jesus! He will accept them! He will use them! He will multiply them! Out of your little He will make much. And with His blessing, you little children, you who now are boys and girls, may now already do great good, and will, when you grow to manhood and womanhood, be mighty to bless both the world and the Church! May the Holy Spirit help you all, today, on this glad "Children's Day," with all these beautiful surroundings, here in God's house, thus to take and give your

all to Jesus to be used by Him, for His glory, in the welfare and salvation of your fellowmen!

And doing so, think how happy and blessed you will make both yourselves and others, both in time and in eternity. Think what a great reward you will have for thus giving your barley loaves and fishes, yourselves and your talents and services, to Christ. This lad of our text had great reward for giving to Jesus, that day, what he had. The joy of relieving human hunger and want; of seeing his few barley cakes and small fishes feeding a great multitude of people: that must have given pleasure to him, and must have been a great reward to him for having given to Jesus what he had. The joy also of seeing Christ honored through what he thus had given Him, his little barley bread and small fishes: that must have been a great joy and reward to him. The joy of gratitude and love, also, in his own heart, in being thus able to do something for Christ: that was a great joy to him. The joy of seeing the gratitude of the people toward Christ: that also was a great joy to him. The joy he felt in knowing that Jesus appreciated what he had done, and loved him for it: oh, that was a great joy to him. Great in every way must have been, I say, his joy and reward for what he had done for Christ, and had given to Christ. The giving of his little barley loaves and fishes to Jesus, that day, brought him, indeed, a rich return. He must have been very happy over it all.

And then think, also, how glad and happy his mother must have been, when she heard all about what had thus occurred, in the life of her dear boy,

that day. Imagine his return home that evening! Imagine her waiting to meet him; her many questions; how he stands and, with glad heart, tells her all about the blessed Savior and His miracle, and how He, the great Christ, asked him, a little boy, for those barley loaves and fishes which she had put up for a "lunch" for him, and how he had, at once, gladly given them to Him, and how he had then, with them, miraculously fed all the great multitude! "Oh, mother!" I imagine I hear him say, "just think of it! It was with my little barley loaves and my little fishes that Jesus did it all! It was with what you, dear mother, gave me, to feed me, that He fed me and fed, also, all those thousands more! Oh, I am so happy!" And as the mother thus hears it all, and learns how Jesus noticed and honored her boy, and used the little he had to feed and bless so many, and saw how happy her child was in having thus been brought so near to his Savior, and in having been instrumentally thus helpful to Him in manifesting His Messianic glory, tears of holy mother-joy, I imagine, filled her eyes, and her own soul overflowed with the same gladness that thrilled the soul of her child. Mother and boy were both happy.

And thus great, also, in many ways, dear young people, will be your reward, if, by now confirming your baptismal vows, and then abiding faithful to them, you will give yourself up, during all your lives, to the service of Jesus. You will yourselves then be happy. Your Christian parents will then be happy with you. Your lives will then become a rich blessing and means of salvation to the multitude of perishing souls scattered all over the wide

moral desert of the world. Jesus will then be greatly honored through you. God will be pleased with you and love you. And then, when your lives here on earth shall, at last, end, you will live a blessed eternal life in heaven, and will there join in a glad and holy "Children's Day Service," which will continue forever and forever!

XXV.

THE PRECIOUS THOUGHTS OF GOD.

Thanksgiving Day.

COLLECT.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, whose mercies are new unto us every morning, and who, though we have in no wise deserved Thy goodness, dost abundantly provide for all our wants of body and soul: give us, we pray Thee, Thy Holy Spirit, that we may heartily acknowledge Thy merciful goodness toward us, give thanks for all Thy benefits, and serve Thee in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

XXV.

"How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee."

PSALMS, cxxxix:17, 18.

THERE is sublimity in the truth that every object and every being that now exists, throughout the whole wide circle of creation, once existed purely and only as a thought in the mind of God. Of every creature, both in heaven and upon earth, there was first, in the divine consciousness, the ideal or typical form, before there was the objective or materialized form. The universe, as it now exists in space, and as it is now seen and studied by man, once lay simply as a conception, as a purpose, as an unrealized thought, in the infinite apprehension of Jehovah, and was the object of His contemplation only. Man's knowledge, therefore, of God is wholly derived from what God has thus, in the objective universe, revealed of Himself. His works, for example, are all simply so many of His embodied or visible thoughts, thrown out upon the canvas of objective existence, for our contemplation and study, and in order to serve as a great mirror, into which we may look, and see and know God. Every blade of grass, every drop of water, every flower and shrub and tree, every world and star, every man and angel, were all once only thoughts in God's mind, and their creation was sim-

ply the divine expression of these thoughts. And thus, also, is God's Word simply the utterance to us of the great and precious thoughts of His love and grace and salvation through Christ: thoughts which flamed in His heart toward us even from eternity. And so every act of God's providence, either toward individuals or toward nations, either in the support and government of the material universe, or in the ordering of His higher moral kingdom, is all simply the opening and unrolling of His great volume of eternal purposes and thoughts.

> "Ten thousand ages ere the skies
> Were into motion brought,
> All the long years and worlds to come
> Stood present to His thought."

It is of these thoughts of God, as thus expressed in His works and word and providence, that David, here in our text, with adoring wonder and thankfulness, speaks. "God," he exclaims, "has had many and blessed thoughts toward me." He recognizes himself as having been thus in the mind of God, as having been thus the object of God's thought. As he elsewhere says: "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

And there was to the psalmist infinite comfort in the assurance that he always had been, and still was, thus constantly thought of by God; that his birth, his endowments, his experience in life, his whole history, from the shepherd life of his boyhood in Bethlehem to his present life of royalty in the king's palace in Jerusalem, had all been so many distinct thoughts in God's mind and God's providence toward him. And as he reviews his life,

and considers the character of all these thoughts of God toward him, and sees how all these thoughts of God toward him have been thoughts of love and patience and undeserved goodness, he is filled with gratitude, his heart overflows with admiring wonder, his lips become vocal with thanksgiving, and he exclaims: "How precious," how rich in divine affection, how unspeakably valuable, "O God, are Thy thoughts unto me! And how infinite, also, the numbers of these Thy divine thoughts expended upon me! How great is the sum of them. If I should count them, or try to count them, I would utterly fail, for they are more in number than the sand." "Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they can not be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

In all this, David is, today, my hearers, an example of duty to each one of us. This is Thanksgiving Day. We are here in God's house, in concert with our fellow-Christians of the whole nation, to render thanks for the blessings lavished upon us, during the past year, by our benevolent heavenly Father! And how rich and valuable these blessings have been, how constant, how adapted to our wants, how numerous, and, above all, how undeserved! "How precious, O God, have been Thy thoughts concerning each one of us during these by-gone months; how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more than the sand upon the ocean shore,"

"The changing seasons, ever coming, going,
Like four evangelists, His praise record;
Nature herself is but a verger, showing
The silent, glorious temple of the Lord."

Reflecting, today, upon the many and precious thoughts of God toward us, let us dwell,

I. Upon His thoughts toward us as individuals; and,

II. Upon His thoughts toward us as a nation.

I. Thanksgiving Day is Especially a Day for the Review and Recognition of Our Personal or Individual Blessings. With gratitude for these must our Thanksgiving song, today, be awakened, and our melody of praise be attuned. How many these personal blessings have been: each one of them an expression of God's loving remembrance and thought and care for us.

And, first, let us reflect upon the negative blessings of our life. How precious and how numerous they are! These negative blessings of life, little as we are prone to think of them, call for our deep and constant thankfulness. That we are not today in deep poverty; not on beds of sickness; not enduring sharp pain and suffering; not without homes; not friendless; not without social comforts; that war does not desolate, and pestilence does not sweep, and famine does not rage in our land; that we are not without freedom of person and religious opinion, and liberty to worship God; that we were not born in pagan lands, and of heathen parents; not trained up in idolatry; not nurtured in superstition; not left without the Bible and the sanctuary and the means of grace; that we are not without the knowledge of

salvation by Christ; in a word, that we are not suffering from all the possible and actual ills of life; that the evils so often feared have not come upon us, and the sorrows so often dreaded have not overtaken us; all these are negative blessings, making our condition and life infinitely different from, and superior to, what it otherwise would have been! And yet all these are the result of God's thoughts of us. It is because He planned and ordered and directed and overruled our life and history, as He has, that we have thus escaped these many possible ills, under which so many millions of our race are suffering.

Today, then, for sorrows that might have come upon us, but have not; for evils that might have overtaken us, but did not; for what we might have been, but are not; for perils unseen; for dangers escaped; for accidents averted; for trials unexperienced; for temptations warded off; for pains we never felt; for all these negative blessings of life, each the result of God's tender and considerate thought of us, let our hearts be filled with praise.

But how precious and countless, especially, are the positive or direct blessings of God toward us! Who can number them? Life, health, food, raiment; dwellings to cover us; social enjoyments; multiplied domestic blessings; homes for the fatherless; hospitals for the sick and suffering; charities for the poor and needy; a government that is free; laws to protect; schools to instruct; the press to inform; homes that are safe and happy; institutions of education and benevolence and religion, sustained and prospered; and, above all, the gospel of the blessed Savior, shining from our pulpits and lighting our

way to heaven—all these are rich, positive blessings which we all, today, possess and enjoy. And they all came to us as gifts of love from God! As earthly parents think how they may please and benefit their children, and plan and contrive for their comfort and happiness, so everyone of our blessings originated in the kind thoughts of our heavenly Father for us, are the result of His loving desire to please and do us good, and have all been bestowed upon us by the liberal, open hands of His providence and of His grace. "Thy thoughts," says David, "Thy thoughts concerning me—how precious they are, and how numerous, also, they are! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand." And thus, also, let each one of us, today, exclaim, as we review God's blessings to us as individuals; and, touched with gratitude over this picture of God's constant and loving thought of us, and care for us, and goodness bestowed upon us, let our heart and tongue and lips and service and life, all be vocal with His praise!

But we may, also, today, apply this language of our text,

II. To Ourselves as a Nation, and Make God's Precious Thoughts Toward Us as a People the Subject of Our Contemplation.

Our American nation has been a great thought in God's mind from all eternity; and every leaf in our national history contains the record of some loving act of His providence toward us. If time permitted, it would be easy, today, to show that its very physical conformation, its natural resources, its climate,

its separation by wide oceans from other nationalities, its date of discovery, the character of its first settlers, its attainment of independence, its form of government as a republic, its wonderful growth and development, its abolishment of slavery, its preservation and perpetuity of national unity, all these might easily be shown to have been thoughts of God concerning us as a nation, successive parts of a divine plan and purpose with regard to us, evolved in His mind in infinite wisdom and love, and brought to pass by His superintending and all-controlling providence: precious thoughts of God concerning our land, thoughts that have made us, as a nation, what we are, and thoughts of love and goodness such as He has had toward no other nation on all the face of the earth; so that, as a nation, recalling our history in the past, and retracing all these tokens of God's goodness toward us, and contrasting them with His dealings with other nations, we may well, today, exclaim: "How precious O, God, have been Thy thoughts unto me! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand!" "He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them! Praise ye the Lord!"

But, confining our view, let us, today, pass by all these great thoughts of God concerning us as a nation in the remote past, and let us limit our meditations to God's precious thoughts toward us as a nation now and during the past year. That is, indeed, why we are here today: to study God's thoughts toward us as revealed in His present providence; to count them up, to dwell upon their inestimable value, to realize the divine love they ex-

hibit, and, by thus dwelling upon these fresh and new thoughts of God's great goodness, which, like the pure snowflakes, have come down from heaven upon us, and now lie scattered in blessings all over our land, awaken our gratitude, and fill our lips with the melody of song and praise. God, during this past year, I say it reverently and gratefully, has done an immense amount of kind and benevolent thinking and planning and doing, also, for us as a nation. The past year has been to us as a nation a year of rich divine mercies; a year full of precious thoughts of God toward us as a people.

Among these precious thoughts of God toward us as a nation, during the past year and now, I name:

(*a*) A fair degree of material prosperity.

Commercial, or material, growth and development is, by no means, the highest and best evidence of national prosperity. It is far from being the most precious of God's thoughts toward a people. A nation may, indeed, be right in the high tide of its material growth, and yet, because of certain moral elements of ruin, silently at work within it, may also at the same time, be in the very way to dissolution and death. But still, material prosperity is one of God's thoughts of love and goodness toward a nation. And this has, during the past year, been one of God's thoughts toward us as a nation.

We have had a season of business depression. But the manufacturing interests of our land are now again reviving. There is again a whirring noise of looms and spindles, a beating of hammers and rollers, a sound of pick and spade and axe and drill, the shriek of engines, the fires of furnaces and forges, the hum of factories, filling the air and brightening

and gladdening our land. For this let us be thankful.

It has been a year, also, of national peace. We are at peace with all nations all over the earth; and, better even than that, we are at peace among ourselves. Although we have passed through our quadrennial presidential campaign, and the public pulse was politically up to fever heat, all over our country, still all was amicably settled at the ballot-box, and the whole nation peacefully accepts the verdict and abides by the decision. That the will of the majority has thus been quietly accepted as final, and that so large a minority should thus at once and good-naturedly bow to this will of the majority, is a magnificent compliment to the genius of our democratic form of government, and argues well for the safety and perpetuity of our present political institutions. For this supremacy of the will of the majority as expressed at the ballot-box, let the election go at any time as it will, and by which supremacy we preserve ourselves as a nation from anarchy and disunion, and can safely outlive all the intense passion of even a presidential campaign, let us, therefore, today, most devoutly thank God.

It has been a year, also, of great healthfulness throughout all our land. No epidemic has invaded or ravaged our shores. All God's winds, as they swept over our land, have been loaded by Him with health, and in the blue retort above us, filled with pure sunshine and genial zephyrs, He has distilled and poured down upon us this priceless boon of bodily comfort and vigor, even from ocean to ocean. For this let us be grateful.

What a year of rich harvests, also, it has been!

Whilst the harvests of different European countries have fallen below their need, God's thoughts toward us, as a nation, was one of plenty, and He has given us more than sufficient. Never have our fields been so universally fruitful; and never have the labors of our husbandmen been more generously rewarded. The light of heaven fell upon our fields from Maine to Florida, from New York to California, and changed them everywhere into waving golden harvests; and the choral of the reapers, calling in gladness to each other, has rolled, in gathering strength, from the slopes of the Atlantic westward over all the boundless grain fields of our broad valleys, until, at last, in notes of joy it broke into a laugh and shout upon the distant coasts of the Pacific. And all this was one of God's precious thoughts toward us. From His open hand have fallen all these millions of bushels of grain. And to Him, therefore, should our hearts, today, in return go up in thanksgiving! "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

And thus, in all respects, has God, during this past year, bestowed upon us richly this boon of material prosperity; and under it we are recovering from all our previous financial and business depression. Our long-silent mills have again sprung into activity; our great commercial enterprises, that had long been a failure, are again a triumphant success; our merchants are emptying their counters almost as fast as they can fill them! our factories are unable to meet the orders that come pouring in upon them; our working classes and mechanics are receiving good

wages and are offered abundant employment. "O God, how precious, in all these respects, have been Thy thoughts, during all this year, toward us as a people. How great is the sum of them. If we should count them, they are more in number than the sand."

Among God's precious thoughts concerning us as a nation, during the past year, I name, however, as a still higher expression of His love toward us,

(*b*) Our many moral and spiritual enjoyments and blessings.

And first among these I place the homes of our land. In no other nation on the face of the earth are there as many real and true homes as there are in ours; not mere houses, owned by a few rich landlords, the dwellers in them being mere tenants, but homes, in the full and deep sense of that precious old Saxon word, owned by their occupants, and the sweet abodes of comfort, intelligence and plenty. These homes are, today, the joy and glory of our land, and, in proportion as they are moral and Christian homes, they are also the groundwork of our national perpetuity and stability. Our nation rests, today, for its final security and glory, not upon any inherent conserving power in its civil institutions, nor upon its vast wealth and resources; nor upon the wisdom of its political rulers, but, under God, upon its millions of homes, upon the pure and conserving influence going out in streams of living water from the altars and firesides of its families, upon the elevation and refining and sacred tuition of its domestic life.

Hence, let us, in our rejoicings, today, thank God that ours is thus, above all other lands, a land of

homes. Let us especially thank Him for the thousands of Christian homes which are scattered all over the country. Let us, above all, today, thank Him for our own Christian homes, with all their sweet affections and interests and sympathies; homes sacred with holy memories: homes rich in the pure, unselfish love of husband and wife, of father and mother, of brother and sister; homes whose walls are hung with the silent faces of the sainted, whose rooms are filled with ancestral heirlooms and with precious mementoes of by-gone generations; where every memory is a joy; where every influence is a benediction; where every band is the golden band of love, and where the holy religion of Christ has breathed upon you and yours the very atmosphere of heaven. Ah! Your home! It is one of God's most "precious thoughts" toward you! By His loving hands have its foundations been laid for you, and its walls been built for you, and by His wise and overruling providence within it. And, today, as you go from this sanctuary to your home, and sit down to your Thanksgiving board, with your loved ones all around you, light in every eye and joy in every heart, if you thank God for nothing else, thank Him, O thank Him most devoutly, for your Christian home!

"There is a land of every land the pride,
Beloved by heaven o'er all the world beside;

There is a spot of earth supremely blest,
A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest.

Where shall that land, that spot of earth, be found?
Art thou a man? a patriot? look around;
And thou shalt find, where'er thy footsteps roam,
That land thy country, and that spot thy home."

Our many sources of national intelligence are, also, among the "precious thoughts" of God concerning us. Our books and newspapers, our schools and academies, our colleges and universities, dotting our whole country, and making education and culture and intelligence possible even to the humblest; no nation, in these respects, is more blessed than we. And even in the higher departments of art and music and sculpture and painting and science, so affluent are our privileges that the poorest youth of the nation has an open avenue to eminence presented to him. This general intelligence of our land is one of God's most precious thoughts toward us.

For not only is intelligence in itself a rich blessing, but under a republican form of government, where the citizens possess the right of suffrage, and are thus self-governing, it becomes also, as an element of national safety, an absolute necessity. The ballot, in the hand of ignorance, is simply the sword of suicide. It is simply the torch of the maniac with which he fires and lays in ashes the home over his own head. Suffrage, exercised ignorantly, leads necessarily to national ruin. To vote well the voter must ever vote wisely. To choose intelligent and just rulers the people must themselves be intelligent and just. And where once the people are no longer thus intelligent and just, there a pure republic ceases to be possible, there self-government is at an end, and there it is better, a thousand times, for the people to be governed by a king, by an emperor, by a very czar, clothed with the most absolute power, than to seek to govern themselves. And hence, as already intimated, the people of a republic must not be intelligent only, but they must also be self-respecting

and regardful of the rights of others, and they must especially be governed by the fear of God. Their education must be moral as well as mental: an education of the conscience as well as of the brain. There must be virtue as well as knowledge; righteousness as well as intelligence; purity as well as philosophy; morality as well as scholarship; Christianity as well as science.

And we have reason, today, in view of all this, to be thankful that the educational work of our land is as largely moral and Christian as it is. Our common schools, though not directly teaching Christianity, still are pervaded by a Christian influence; whilst in our Sunday schools and parochial schools and academies and seminaries and four hundred colleges and universities of our land, with comparatively few exceptions, the Bible is a text-book, and the culture is directly and earnestly Christian. For this "precious thought" of God, thus, by His overruling providence, causing the salt of a pure morality and piety to be cast into these very springs and fountainheads of our national life, let us all, today, lift up our hearts in gratitude to Him. "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of thy salvation: the fear of the Lord is thy treasure."

But, God has also blessed us as a nation in still other respects. There are, especially, many religious blessings for which we ought, above all others, to be thankful today. The bonds, for example, that bind Christians of all denominations together were never so strong as they are today: that is something to be thankful for. The missionary activity, also, of the churches never was greater that it is now:

that is a source of thankfulness. The spirit of Christian liberality, also, never flamed more warmly, and never has the work of enlarging the borders of the Redeemer's kingdom gone on so successfully as now: for all this let God, today, be thanked. And so for all His other precious spiritual blessings to us as a nation. For His blessed Word, so full of gracious promises, of comfort to the afflicted, of strength to the weak, of help to the tempted, and joyful anticipation to the dying: for this thank Him. For His holy sacraments, means by which the Holy Spirit renews and sanctifies us: for these thank Him. For His earthly sanctuaries, covering all our valleys, and crowing all our hilltops, from ocean to ocean, where the gospel is proclaimed, and where liberty of religious worship, according to his creed, is enjoyed by each one of our more than sixty millions of people: for this, today, thank him. For the abiding presence of His Holy Spirit, comforting, strengthening, convicting, converting, guiding, sanctifying, and saving many. for this thank Him. But above all, today, for His unspeakable gift, the gift of gifts; the tender, pitying Christ; the loving, forgiving Savior; the suffering, crucified Redeemer; the risen, glorified Lord, pleading for us even now amid the glories of His eternal abode: for this most precious of all God's great thoughts of love toward us, let us all, today, blend heart and tongue in loudest thanksgiving, saying, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." Other gifts can be named, spoken, measured; but this gift of His own Son, to be our Savior, transcends all measurement, all utterance, all conception! Only in that eternal song of the saints, whose notes shall forever break and swell

and rise around His throne, as Mediatorial King, will there be, in our thanksgiving, even an approach to all its infinite merits! O God, for this precious divine thought of a Savior, help us all, today, as His disciples, as citizens of a land so richly blessed with the benedictions of His holy religion, help us, for this best of Thy gifts, to be especially thankful, and even now already may our hearts begin to sing the anthem of heaven: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever!"

What we all want is a more thankful spirit! A truly grateful heart finds some theme of praise in every hour's experience. It hears music in every sighing wind and wailing storm, and finds blessings in each event of life, be it what it may. On the other hand, a gloomy heart sees no beauty, hears no melody, finds no good in anything. Is is not, then, our external life, or circumstances, or condition that we need to have changed, half so much as the spirit of our inner life. Get the song of contentment into your heart, and you will then hear songs all about you. Get the beauty of holiness into your soul, and you will then see only beauty and good in all things. Get the peace of God into your life, and you will then have the angel of peace dwell abidingly with you. Our hearts make our world for us. The things we see around us are but the shadows of our own inner experiences. The things we hear are but the echoes our own inner thoughts and feelings. Nothing is real but life. Pictures in the heart fill the world with loveliness.

"There is many a rest on the road of life,
And if we would only stop to take it;
And many a tone from the better land,
If the querulous heart would wake it.
To the sunny soul that is full of hope,
And whose beautiful trust ne'er faileth,
The grass is green, and the flowers are bright,
Though the wintry storm prevaileth."

Today, then, Christian friends, as we leave this sanctuary, let us bear with us to our homes a deep and grateful sense of all these "precious thoughts" of God unto us. Let us carry with us a thankful heart. Let our lips speak forth His praises. Let our lives attest our gratitude. And let our charity to the poor also express our thanks to God, who is the common Father of us all. Reviewing the mercies which God has bestowed upon us, as individuals, as families, as a community, as a commonwealth and as a nation, during this by-gone year, and remembering that all these were thoughts born in His infinite love for us, and wrought out and conferred by His sovereign grace and providence over us, let us daily, nay, hourly, with David, lift up our grateful hearts to Him, and with joyful lips and tongue exclaim: "How precious are Thy thoughts unto us, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand!" "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting!" "Praise ye the Lord!" "Praise Him in His sanctuary! Praise Him in the firmament of His power! Praise Him for His mighty acts! Praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Mountains and all hills; beasts and all cattle; kings of the earth and all peo-

ple; princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens; old men and children; let everything that hath breath praise the Lord! Praise ye the Lord!"